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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Fernández Estigarribia (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 33 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/543, A/51/678)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.38, L.39, L.40)

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The question of the Middle East, at the core of which is the question of Palestine, remains an important standing item on the agenda of this Organization. We had believed — indeed, we had hoped — that more progress would have been made along the path to peace five years after the start of the peace process in Madrid. However, witnessing the stalemate that has beset the peace process, we must express clearly our extreme concern and sound a strong and sincere warning of the dangerous results for the whole region. Nevertheless, this does not affect our belief in peace or our constant commitment to move along the path of peace no matter what the obstacles. We would like to note here the positive commitment of other parties to the peace process.

In participating in the discussion of this item, my delegation proceeds from its belief in the essential role of the United Nations in the peace process and in the need to reactivate this role to support the constant efforts made by the sponsors of the peace process and other parties concerned. It is also necessary to reactivate the peace process to support the current endeavours to extricate it from the dilemma that has impeded and paralysed it.

The United Nations is the foundation of international legitimacy. It embodies the collective conscience of all peoples of the Earth, and all the resolutions that contain the principles constituting the bases for the settlement of the question of Palestine and the Middle East were adopted within its framework. The clearest example of this is Security Council resolution 242 (1967), the cornerstone of the current peace process. With it, the door of peace was opened in 1967, and its implementation, in letter and spirit, on all tracks, along with the realization of the inalienable political and national rights of the Palestinian people and the complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967, will lead to the desired peace.

The question of the Middle East peace process has pride of place in the agenda and the concerns of my country. Jordan's contributions since 1948 in this regard are well known. In its international relations, Jordan's approach follows the spirit of the principles of the Charter, which means that Jordan believes in the peaceful settlement of all international questions in all circumstances. As soon as we saw genuine signs that the

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conflict in the Middle East was being addressed, Jordan hastened to promote the success of the historic opportunity that arose, in Madrid, for the first time in the history of this question. Jordan did so with the same positive spirit and realism that it has evinced towards all endeavours to achieve the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of justice, legitimacy, United Nations resolutions and international law.

Jordan's understanding of peace is that it must be just, comprehensive and lasting, which is also the understanding expressed by most international parties directly concerned with question of the Middle East. Our commitment to peace within this understanding is a strategic and principled one, and stems from our conviction that this peace is essential for all the countries and peoples of the region. Once it is achieved, it will constitute a turning point in the history of the region and a path towards new horizons of stability, security and peaceful coexistence for all, both Arabs and Israelis, who will enjoy the normal life they have been deprived of for nearly six decades.

On the basis of our commitment to peace, we signed a Peace Treaty with Israel in the autumn of 1994 that brought new good-neighbourly relations between the two countries and set out the bases and the principles for their cooperation in various fields. This Treaty constituted an important contribution on the road to achieving the comprehensive peace desired by all parties and the international community, in particular as it came about after the achievement of peace with the great sisterly country of Egypt and the progress made on the Israeli-Palestinian track with the signing of the Oslo agreement. There was great hope that this would be followed by progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks with Israel in order to achieve a comprehensive peace and to start the process of economic reconstruction and development in the region as a whole. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

On the basis of the foregoing, we believe it has become necessary to consider seriously and objectively the causes of the impediments to progress. We call upon all parties participating in the peace process to continue their efforts in order to extricate the process from the dilemma that has brought it to a halt, because the responsibility for establishing a comprehensive peace and seeing it through to the end is a collective and common responsibility. However, that does not mean that all parties bear equal responsibility for impeding progress and for the non-implementation of agreements reached.

Through our commitment to peace and our keen interest in consolidating the gains made towards peace, and on the basis of our commitment to the principles on which the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty is based, it is our duty to say honestly to Israel that we have only one path before us, and we must either continue along the path of peace or push the region back into the abyss of violence, confrontation and extremism.

The new Government of Israel is correct to invoke the slogan of security. Security is indeed one of the most important objectives of the peace we are trying to achieve for all the countries and peoples of the region. However, security cannot be achieved by refraining from the implementation of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. What is happening in Hebron is a case in point.

Security cannot be achieved by stepping up practices that harm the Palestinians, their rights and their hopes. Security cannot be achieved with the continuation of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories, whether by expansion of existing settlements or construction of new ones, which amount to the same thing.

Security cannot be achieved with the continuation of the policy of confiscation of land, demolition of homes, withdrawal of identity cards, isolation of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, restriction of the movements of Palestinians, keeping thousands of Palestinians in prison and allowing Israeli security forces to use physical violence, which is to say torture, during the interrogation of suspects. This runs counter to all the most basic rules of respect for human rights and justice and is unequivocally rejected and condemned by the civilized world.

Last week we saw tragic scenes on television of what happens to Palestinian workers detained by Israeli soldiers. They were kicked and humiliated physically and psychologically. We are horrified at these repeated practices and their effect on the feelings of the people under occupation. Such practices deepen wounds and plunge the region back into the atmosphere of conflict, enmity and bitterness that we thought we had left behind us.

The peace process is based on clear principles, the most important of which is the land-for-peace formula. This principle was contained in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which declares the inadmissibility

of the occupation by force of the territory of others. This is one of the bases of the peace process.

The peace we seek to achieve is a just, comprehensive and lasting one. How can justice be had if land is not given back to its legitimate owners? How can land be returned to its legitimate owners if settlement continues? How can we be convinced that this is the ultimate objective when Israel continues to issue clear, formal declarations affirming the continuation of the settlement policy and the lack of any intention to abandon it, even within the framework of peace?

The latest declaration by the Israeli Prime Minister, two days ago — that the Jordan Valley is a permanent part of the land of Israel and that it will continue to be, whatever the final settlement — was a dangerous act of escalation that runs counter to the commitments, needs, principles and the very idea of peace. Peace cannot be achieved by reaffirming and consolidating the causes of conflict, but rather by eliminating them. It cannot be achieved by swallowing up land through expansion and denying the rights of the other party.

Such declarations undermine our aim to create an atmosphere of trust so that the peace process can flourish and so that the peoples of the region can transcend the wounds and tragedies of the past and move towards a future of cooperation, reconciliation and hope.

The Israeli-Palestinian Agreement approved the deferral of such questions as those of settlements, Jerusalem and refugees to the final status negotiations in order to provide a smooth beginning for the peace process. It is natural that such things should be left unchanged until the time for negotiating on them. It is inconceivable that the deferral should be an opportunity to change the facts on the ground in favour of the occupier, thereby making solutions more difficult and more complex.

On the basis of the foregoing, we believe that it has become necessary to put all the deferred questions on the agenda of the negotiations and to deal with them seriously, objectively and with a genuine will to arrive at acceptable, legal and just solutions that would make peace for the peoples of the region an acceptable option that deserves support so that we may reach the lasting peace we desire.

We believe that this is the correct way towards peace and that the solution of the deferred problems, such as the questions of the refugees, Jerusalem, sovereignty and self-determination of the Palestinian people, is the only guarantee for security, stability and progress for all the peoples of the region, Arab and Israeli alike.

This comprehensive approach calls for moving ahead in the negotiations on the Lebanese and Israeli tracks, starting from where they left off, in order to achieve the desired and necessary settlement on the basis of the Madrid formula and the resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 425 (1978). Progress towards peace and the achievement of peace is the surest guarantee for stopping extremism and violence.

The question of Jerusalem is the crux of peace. We must inevitably arrive at a just and balanced solution to it. There is a clear consensus on all international, legal and political levels that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the West Bank, which has been occupied since 1967. Therefore, it is subject to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolutions.

The Security Council has paid special attention to Jerusalem since the beginning of the Israeli occupation and adopted resolution 252 (1968), which rejected all Israeli actions and legislation aimed at changing the character of this Holy City or its demographic composition.

Security Council resolution 476 (1980) clearly stated that there is a need to end the Israeli occupation of Arab territories occupied in 1967, including the city of Jerusalem. Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which calls upon States not to transfer their diplomatic missions to the city of Jerusalem, is the clearest example of the firm international position of rejecting Israel's annexation of this city, which runs counter to principles of international law, and Jerusalem, as an occupied territory, is subject to the rules of international legality.

I referred earlier to the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement had approved the deferral of the consideration of the question of Jerusalem to the final status negotiations in view of the sensitive nature of the question. Therefore, any action taken by Israel since the beginning of the Madrid process to alter the political, legal or demographic status of Jerusalem is tantamount to creating a *fait accompli* to be imposed on the Arab party, which would constitute a judgement on the status of the Holy City before the beginning of the final status negotiations. This is unacceptable and cannot be conducive to the peace we all desire. Nor is it favourable

to all the peoples of the region and their hope for a common future of stability, cooperation and respect.

We followed with sadness and concern the acts of bloody violence that took a toll of more than 70 Palestinians and 20 Israelis after the Government of Israel opened a tunnel in the area of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem, in total disregard not only of established rights and contractual obligations, but also of the feelings of the whole Arab and Islamic world.

We must reaffirm, therefore, that the deferral of the consideration of the question of Jerusalem means that its status must be maintained. Thus the Government of Jordan, in order to maintain the Holy City's special religious, cultural and historic character, has taken a strong interest in continuing its custodianship of the holy places so as to protect them from all dangers until the desired final status is achieved.

We believe that the international community has a great responsibility to move the peace process forward and to ensure its success. While it is the people who are the basis of peace, they do not confine themselves to an abstract vision of it; they also perceive peace by its results. My country looks forward to a wider and deeper international understanding of the financial, developmental and economic needs of the peoples and countries of the region. In this connection, we attach great importance to the role of the economic summit conferences held at Casablanca, Amman and, most recently, at Cairo in continuing and supporting regional development.

While we are encouraged by the success of those conferences, we have noticed the repercussions that the interruption of the peace process has had on the conference hosted by our sister country Egypt last November. Many of the countries participating in that conference expressed the need for political progress in order to ensure economic and developmental success. We believe, therefore, that the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy, must play a vital role in moving the peace process forward and in supporting the efforts of the sponsors of the peace process.

We also believe it is useful and necessary to combine the efforts of the European Union with those of the sponsors of the peace process, with the goal of mobilizing the requisite goodwill in all areas in order to promote the peace process and provide the elements for its success. Particularly important are the efforts made by the member States of the European Union since the beginning of the peace process and the ongoing ones aimed at contributing to the process of economic development.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): We all know that the past year has been a particularly trying time for the Middle East peace process. Although 1996 began on a promising note with the peaceful and democratic general elections held in Palestine on 20 January, a series of devastating terrorist attacks against Israel in late February and early March quickly enveloped the spirit of optimism surrounding the peace process in a sombre and cynical cloud.

Fully recognizing the irrevocable damage that terrorism can wreak on the peace process, the international community came together on 13 March at the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm El Sheikh resolutely to denounce the violence. Even prior to the Summit, the world community echoed its firm support for the Middle East peace process by holding a conference on assistance to the Palestinians at Paris in January, at which the Republic of Korea announced its decision to provide further aid of $3 million, in addition to an earlier provision of $12 million earmarked for Palestinian rehabilitation projects.

Despite calls for reconciliation and peace by the outside world, the reality of the Middle East has shown little improvement. Israel's response to the terrorist attacks, which included the closure of its borders with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has led to further socio-economic hardship for the Palestinian people, and, unfortunately, has also deepened the distrust between the two sides. Most recently, in September, there was an eruption of large-scale clashes — arguably the worst since the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993 — which stemmed from the Israeli decision to open a new entrance to a tunnel running under a major religious site in Jerusalem.

It is not only the Israeli-Palestinian track that has suffered major setbacks. In April, significant upheaval occurred along the Israel-Lebanon border, and Israel and Syria have not made much headway either on the issues related to the Golan Heights. The lack of progress in those areas is of great concern since the Middle East peace process can be successful only if there is progress on each track, in keeping with the approach envisioned at the Madrid Peace Conference.

Despite the obstacles that threaten to unravel the peace process, we cannot simply throw up our hands in

frustration, as the implications of the enduring conflict in the Middle East, in both political and economic terms, are too overwhelming. In the final analysis, the problems that plague the peace process, insurmountable as they may seem, are man-made and thus can be worked out through the resolve and commitment of man.

Indeed, history shows us that no great milestone has ever been achieved without tremendous hardship, trials and perseverance. My delegation wishes to remind the parties concerned of this simple truth, which, amid the dramatic ups and downs experienced recently, may inspire them to sustain their fortitude and long-term vision so that Arab-Israeli relations may improve and progress be made towards a peaceful reconciliation.

Do international relations sway domestic politics, or are they influenced by them? The answer to that question, in both the theory and practice of diplomacy, has always been elusive. The situation in the Middle East, however, is a clear-cut example of how domestic decisions can spill over into the international realm.

My delegation has no intention of engaging in a discussion on the particular policy choices of a Member State. What we do wish to stress is that the parties directly affected by the Middle East peace process have the full power to map out its destiny, a situation markedly different from that of the cold war years, when the pressure of outside Powers had more of an impact on regional politics. In today's setting, the judgment of the parties directly concerned — the clarity of their perceptions and the appropriateness of their decisions — will be the sole determinant of the nature of the environment in which they and future generations will live.

Indeed, every effort must be made to avert the realization of the admonition made by President Mubarak during the Middle East/North African Economic Conference held at Cairo last month, that it might be said

> "centuries from today, that our countries had peace within their grasp and squandered it". (*The New York Times, 13 November 1996, p. 9*)

We therefore urge all the parties directly concerned to transcend their short-term, myopic interests and, by extinguishing distrust and rekindling the peace process, to look to the horizon towards the greater and nobler goals of reconciliation and common prosperity.

In closing, I should like to say that if one examines the plight of the Middle East and that of the Korean peninsula, a few key parallels can be drawn. But what stands out most conspicuously is the fact that the two situations require the staunch political will of the parties directly concerned if a peaceful settlement is to be reached.

The international community has undertaken a number of commendable initiatives to facilitate the peace process. Beyond these diplomatic efforts at the international level, however, the most critical requirement is for the parties directly concerned to bridge the political chasm by engaging in candid and open-minded dialogue. We are confident that the same initiative, determination and courage that the parties demonstrated in forging a historical framework for the peace and stability of the region can likewise be invoked to pave a new avenue built upon cooperation and coexistence that will eventually lead to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to say that Lebanon is one of the countries that has suffered most from the Arab-Israeli conflict. We believe that we have much to gain if we can achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace — a peace that all in our region are working towards — in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1968), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). My delegation would again like to reiterate its commitment to the peace process that began in Madrid in 1991. We had accepted at that time the initiative of the sponsors — the United States and the Russian Federation — on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). For 18 years, however, Israel has refused to implement that resolution, and continues to occupy part of southern Lebanon and daily to attack innocent people there. Lebanon is still demanding the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and requests that Israel withdraw from Lebanon back to internationally recognized borders.

Here, I should like to make clear once again the position of my country. Lebanon categorically rejects any proposal — old or new — that would separate the Lebanese and Syrian tracks in the negotiations. We reiterate our absolute rejection of any suspect proposals for Lebanon, such as those we have learned about through the media. That would represent an attempt to

breathe new life into the agreement of 17 May, of which we reject both the spirit and letter. We reaffirm our commitment to complete solidarity and full, unswerving cooperation with Syria in the pursuit of our shared destiny. It is no secret that the Lebanese and Syrian tracks are of strategic importance and crucial to the success of the peace talks. If this basic truth is not properly understood, the situation will continue to worsen.

Peace in the region will never be established as long as Israel continues to refuse to discharge its obligations under international law, the principles agreed at Madrid, and the principle of land for peace, specifically withdrawal from occupied Arab territories. That would include withdrawal from Lebanon back to internationally recognized borders, pursuant to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), as well as from the Golan back to the lines of 4 July 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon since 1978 has caused destruction and tragedy in my country. Neither the invasion of 1978, which was known as the Litani operation, nor the subsequent one in 1982 — the so-called Galilee operation — has guaranteed security for Israel. In fact, they resulted in further complications and considerable suffering for all concerned. The continuing violence in southern Lebanon has once again proved the complete failure of the idea of the so-called security region established by Israel. Likewise, the numerous attacks launched daily by Israel in the north of that region unambiguously indicate the failure of the whole concept.

The Assembly will no doubt recall the aggression perpetrated last April by Israel against Lebanon — the so-called Grapes of Wrath operation — which affected dozens of villages in southern Lebanon key installations throughout Lebanese territory. All of us will have seen on television images of villages that were destroyed. We saw thousands of innocent civilians fleeing before the bombardment by Israel's Air Force, warships and tanks, which spared no one. They even targeted civilian automobiles, regardless of the direction they were headed in. Public opinion was shocked to see the bombing of an ambulance that was carrying children. Houses were destroyed with their inhabitants still inside them, and innocent people were buried under the debris of their homes.

The international conscience was sharply moved when the Israelis bombed the United Nations position in Qana, and the remains of more than 110 people were scattered about, including women and children who had sought shelter at that camp in the belief that, by seeking refuge with those responsible for international peace and security, they would be protected from the destructive power of the "Grapes of Wrath".

The Assembly will recall that the General Assembly condemned Israel's aggressive acts against Lebanon. The Commission on Human Rights, which adopted several resolutions on the human rights situation in southern Lebanon, has clearly reiterated the fact that Israel had violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Its actions were also in violation of the Hague Convention of 1907. Lebanese detainees are still living in concentration camps run by Israel in southern Lebanon, in particular in the Al Khiyam camp, and are suffering intensely as a result. We demand once again their immediate release.

Operation Grapes of Wrath showed the true face of Israel, which continues flagrantly to violate all the norms of morality and international law, and it also revealed Israel's animosity and warlike intentions towards the people of the region.

Israel has not yet understood that fire and sword cannot lead to peace. We have repeated in the Security Council that such a policy will only cause death and destruction and lead to the disgrace and fall from power of those who perpetrate it. We reaffirm the necessity of implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which alone can guarantee a return to calm and stability in southern Lebanon. We repeat that our people are entitled to resist Israeli occupation in the southern parts of our country and in the Bekaa-West region. This right is based on international law and on the dozens of resolutions and declarations adopted by international bodies, including the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, which was adopted with the participation of more than 130 Heads of State or Government. Our people are simply exercising their innate right to free their territory from Israeli occupation, which, in the view of international law, is undoubtedly the worst form of terrorism.

It is clear that despite all this destruction and death, the hatred of extremists and of the enemies of the peace process has not diminished. The "Grapes of Wrath" Government has been replaced by a new one, which is not afraid to say that it is against peace, against the Madrid peace process. The new Israeli Government has

also said no to the Madrid principles. It has said no to the exchange of land for peace and to a return to the table to resume the negotiations where they were left off during the previous Israeli Administration. It has said no to fulfilling the commitments entered into by the previous Government. It has said yes to the construction of dozens of new settlements in the Golan and the West Bank, yes to the enlargement of dozens of existing settlements, yes to the confiscation of other lands belonging to the Arabs of the occupied territories, yes to the complete obliteration of the Arab identity of Al-Quds, yes to the multiplication of threats and shows of force, and yes to the escalation of tension.

This is an irresponsible Government, which speaks the language of violence, excessive settlement, expansion and the refusal to compromise, instead of the language of peace and reconciliation. Each day brings new proof of this Government's zeal for threats, arbitrary acts and incessant violations of the Geneva Conventions, in particular the fourth Geneva Convention, and the norms of international law. Israel seems to be entirely indifferent to all this; it even tries to convince the world that a telephone call to an Arab leader or uttering the word "peace" is some sort of evidence of its desire for peace.

Enough is enough. No one can any longer be misled by such words. We must make the leaders in Tel Aviv realize that the world will reject the drums of war, that the world would like the negotiations to be resumed where they stopped, in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the Madrid accords. Here we would like to reiterate that the multilateral negotiations will never succeed so long as Israel does not withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. It is pointless to continue to make a huge fuss to give the impression that the peace process is advancing while Israel continues to reject international legality and the Madrid principles. We are completely convinced that the multilateral talks which have taken place to date were premature and will come to naught so long as the bilateral tracks do not achieve their expected results in accordance with international resolutions and the Madrid principles.

We believe that the Security Council is the embodiment of international political authority and has the responsibility to protect States against aggression and to assure the implementation of its resolutions. We also believe that holding meetings of the Security Council whenever necessary to consider the question of Israeli aggression against southern Lebanon can only strengthen the peace process in the Middle East rather than the opposite.

Regarding the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), we believe that it plays an important central role in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). That is why we once again ask that UNIFIL be kept in place in its present form so that it can fulfil its mandate and play the important role it has been given. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the officers and personnel of the Force for the efforts they have made since 1978. Likewise, we would like to express our profound gratitude to the States that contribute contingents to UNIFIL.

I would like to reiterate Lebanon's commitment to meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and to fulfilling their rights to self-determination and to the creation of their own State. We call for the full implementation of resolution 194 (III), which unambiguously reaffirms the right to the Palestinians to return to their homes.

Lebanon rejects unequivocally all attempts to resettle on our territory the Palestinians who are there now. This position was set out clearly in the Lebanese Constitution, in accordance with the 1989 Taif Agreement. It represents the national consensus of the Lebanese.

As far as Al-Quds is concerned, we reaffirm that Israel's decision to impose its laws and its administration on the Holy City of Al-Quds is illegal, and therefore null and void. In this connection, this truth has been confirmed in several Security Council and the General Assembly resolutions, notably Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971) and 476 (1980).

We say to those who look at the problem of Al-Quds from a subjective angle that Jerusalem is at the heart of the Palestinian question. We cannot accept any measures which affect the Holy City, its people and its land. The Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem have been subjected to all sorts of harassment and pressure aimed at forcing them to leave, which would distort the demographic and social status of Al-Quds. We call attention to the threat posed by the conducting of searches in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and at the other Holy Places most cherished by Christians and Muslims.

We also condemn the fact that some States have returned their diplomatic missions to Al-Quds, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980). We would urge States to respect the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in accordance with the Charter.

The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty cannot be relevant to our region so long as Israel refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and continues to threaten the region with its nuclear arsenals, defying international law and the resolutions of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Israel must fully and unequivocally respect the will of the international community, as enshrined in the international law and in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Only in this way can we achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. All we want is peace and prosperity, but only on the basis of the Madrid principles, international law and the principle of the return of land for peace.

Lebanon suffered through a 17-year war that ended only five years ago. We aspire to rebuilding our country and to providing a better and more prosperous future for our children. This will be possible only when a just comprehensive and lasting peace is established in the region, in accordance with international law and the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations.

The current deplorable state of the peace process will prevail as long as Israel continues to behave irresponsibly. Israel continues to undermine the peace process and its behaviour will have dangerous consequences not only for the parties to the conflict, but for the entire international community. It is high time that Israel understood that peace cannot be restored unless we recover all of our territory. We call upon the sponsors of the peace process to rectify these matters before it is too late.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the President for giving me the opportunity to speak before the General Assembly on the situation in the Middle East.

The graph of events in the Middle East reveals a situation of grave deterioration, tension and increasing international concern over the peace process. Anyone who listens to the declarations of the responsible Israeli officers or of the Israel Government since it took power will find that they take every opportunity to affirm their intransigence their desire to alter the foundation of the peace process and to restart the peace talks from scratch, and their refusal to build on what was achieved during the talks that took place under the previous Israeli Government.

The current Israeli Government has denied the principle of "land for peace", replacing it with a formula of "peace for peace" and thus imposing a *fait accompli* on the Arabs. Here, we must state once again that the peace process began with a fundamental agreement, the Madrid framework, the core of which was the principle of the return of land for peace, as well as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Annexes to this initiative were agreed upon in the course of lengthy discussions between the United States, the Arab parties and Israel. The end result was the approval of these annexes, which have played a very important role as parameters of the peace process and contributed to relaunching this process.

Indeed, on the basis of that framework and those annexes, the discussions and activities of Arab and Israeli representatives were resumed, first in Madrid, then in Washington. By virtue of persistent efforts on the part of the concerned parties, a number of agreements were reached, establishing the rights and obligations of the parties. Within the framework of these commitments, it was agreed between Syria and Israel that Israel would withdraw from the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. Negotiations continued on the other elements of peace under the supervision and with the knowledge of the United States.

The current turn of events in the Middle East began with the new Israeli Government, which brought with it the three "no"s: no to withdrawal from the Golan; no to withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories; and no to a Palestinian State. Israel made declarations stating that it wanted to start negotiations from square one without any preconditions, but that this would mean abandoning the Madrid framework, which in its essence is based on the principle of land for peace. The graph will thus continue its downward trend, following the direction of the bloody confrontations that erupted when Israel opened the entrance to the tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This trend was preceded by premeditated Israeli provocations and an unwarranted escalation against Syria, and continued with attacks against southern Lebanon and its western Bekaa. Additional provocations by Israel included allegations and campaigns against Syrian training contingents, which, as we have said before, were operating within the framework of a precautionary defensive training programme.

It is equally strange how Israel attempts to delude world public opinion, claiming itself to be a highly vulnerable target. These ploys have become well known to the entire world, which is well aware that Israel is the largest military Power of the region and owns the most

sophisticated weaponry, particularly weapons of mass destruction, and first and foremost nuclear weapons.

Everyone knows that Israel is the one and only country in the region that has not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to the full-scope safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Israel is acquiring weapons and filling its arsenals to the brim. Could Israel — joined as it is in a strategic coalition with the United States and manufacturing a wide variety of weapons, from tanks and rockets to the most deadly weapon of mass destruction, the nuclear weapon — really be afraid of the Syrian contingent, which is an ordinary regular preventive defence force? Israel cannot possibly fear the Syrian contingent, given that, whenever Israel plans a military attack against Syria or Lebanon, or to acquire additional American weaponry, or to strike a blow against the peace process, it resorts to fabricating such allegations to justify its position and to escalate the military situation, believing that Syria and the Arab side will accept its conditions, which are based on the principle of peace for peace.

Not content with striking one blow after the other against the peace process, the Israeli Government has also persisted in nurturing extremists. The spokesman for the Prime Minister of Israel has declared that his Government is devising plans and programmes to build 900 new housing units for settlers, while three new settlements have been recommended for the Syrian Golan by the Minister for Energy and Infrastructure. The Israeli Government has also decided to expand its settlements in the West Bank, in occupied Arab Jerusalem and in the Gaza sector, in defiance of international law, legally binding international resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, thereby increasing tensions in the region and encouraging further violence. Syria, condemns Israel's settlement policies and activities, whether they call for building new settlements or expanding the present settlements, which is no less dangerous than building settlements, since it entails the annexation of additional occupied Arab land. Syria also considers such procedures and practices to be nothing less than additional attempts by the Israeli extremists to abort the peace process and urges the international community to condemn all such Israeli practices and measures. We call upon Israel to implement all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The indicator on the graph I mentioned earlier is sliding ever downward. Regrettably, the peace process that began in Madrid and was welcomed by Syria and other Arab countries is now deadlocked as a result of the Israeli Government's rejection of all previous efforts made and all obligations assumed over the past five years. The position of the current Israeli Government, I regret to say, is characterized by its total rejection of all the agreed elements of peace and its complete nullification of the peace process. The Israeli Government attempts to persuade the world that it is speaking about peace and that it is the very dove of peace. But we ask: What kind of peace is it talking about? It publicly states that withdrawal from the Syrian Golan is unacceptable and that its withdrawal from southern Lebanon is subject to conditions; these positions contradict the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for Israel's unconditional and immediate withdrawal from that region. Israel refuses to recognize agreements entered into by the previous Government or to fulfil its obligations — obligations that are not mere words, as the Israeli Prime Minister has called them, but that are contained in legally binding resolutions, particularly those calling for Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Golan to the boundaries of 4 June 1967.

Peace is a balanced equation. It requires reciprocity between both parties. And that leads us to another question: What is Syria's interest — what is the interest of the Arab parties to the conflict — in seeking a peace that restores neither land nor rights to their owners? Can any just or fair person in today's world expect Syria to make peace with an Israeli Government while Syrian land remains in Israeli hands? We remain convinced that the resumption of peace talks on the basis of the Madrid Conference — that is, on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace and the implementation of all undertakings, pledges and obligations reached with the previous Israeli Government, particularly the agreement on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the boundaries of 4 June 1967 — is the only way in which a just and comprehensive peace in the only region can be achieved.

When Syria and other Arab countries chose peace as a strategic option, we assumed that the other party to the equation would also seriously and genuinely commit itself to the process and display the same good intentions. Syria and the Arabs are committed to that strategic option. Syria believes that the peace process must be successful, because peace will benefit all the parties in the region — Israel foremost among them — as well as all the countries of the world. It is therefore important for the

entire international community to show resolve and determination and to mobilize all its potential so that peace can triumph and all can enjoy their rights. That is how peace becomes just, for peace means justice and justice is integral to peace. If that cannot come to pass, there will be no peace, there will be only submission.

We look forward to the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace on the basis of the Madrid agreements, the implementation of legally binding international resolutions and the principle of land for peace, as well as the fulfilment of all the obligations entered into when the Government of the Labour Party held power in Israel. From this rostrum, we call upon the international community to exert its effective influence on Israel to desist its settlement policy, to refrain from expanding the settlements in the occupied Arab territories and to resume peace talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, for the success of the peace process will have a positive effect on the region and on the entire world, bringing peace, security and development, which will lead to prosperity and progress for us all. Syria will always advocate peace in all its aspects and hopes that everyone will endeavour to achieve that longed-for goal with all possible determination.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): When, in 1991, the city of Madrid hosted the parties to the peace process in the Middle East, in full view of the whole world and with the participation of the sponsors of the process, Egypt, as a participant in the Conference, was among the first to be convinced that making progress in the peace process between the Arab parties and Israel would be neither easy nor automatic. We expected the process to run into some problems, but we did not lose hope that a just and comprehensive peace would ultimately be achieved.

That historic Conference gave rise to comprehensive negotiating processes whose frame of reference was the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of the return of land for peace. These are the cardinal principles that provide the solid basis for any peace that might prevail in the Middle East. The machinery of the process took the form of numerous negotiating tracks, from a bilateral track to negotiate a withdrawal from the occupied territories, to a multilateral track to negotiate regional questions, such as disarmament, water, Palestinian refugees and the establishment of regional economic cooperation, which, from the outset, was believed to be the next logical step once peace had been secured through a just and comprehensive political settlement.

Since the very beginning, the negotiating process has never been an end in itself. The ultimate objective was and remains the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace between the Arabs and Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal from all the territories it has occupied since 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of all their inalienable and legitimate national rights.

Undoubtedly, the march towards peace has registered many praiseworthy successes, particularly the numerous agreements signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Oslo, Washington and Cairo. These agreements have given the Palestinians a degree of self-rule for the first time and enabled them to conduct and run most of their own day-to-day affairs. It is also noteworthy that the peace process led to the signing of the Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel in October 1994. Today, after the regrettable developments that we are now witnessing in the Middle East, Egypt believes that it must draw the attention of the international community to certain important facts that should not be overlooked during the General Assembly's consideration of the agenda item on the Middle East.

First, the backtracking by the current Israeli Government as regards the continuation of negotiations on the basis of the principles accepted by all parties and which formed the basis of the Madrid peace process has seriously damaged that very process. Ironically, the Israeli Government that started the process in Madrid was headed by the Likud Party currently in power in Israel.

Secondly, a glance at the current state of the peace process reveals a dark picture that does not inspire optimism. The Lebanese and Syrian tracks are at a complete standstill, while the Palestinian track has backslid as a result of the position of the Israeli Government, its lack of respect for its international contractual obligations, its non-implementation of the agreement on the redeployment of its forces outside the city of Al-Khalil (Hebron) and its failure to withdraw from zones B and C of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Thirdly, not satisfied with damaging the peace process, the Israeli Government adopted a policy of fait accompli in resuming the establishment of settlements and moving settlers into Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. It has started to build roads to connect the settlements to Israel and offered settlers attractive tax incentives to encourage them to settle in the occupied

territories. Egypt warns that, should Israel persist in these policies, it will be challenging the framework that has been agreed since the beginning of the peace process. These actions also constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. They are also a clear contravention of the provisions of the Oslo agreement relating to the need for the parties to refrain from taking any measures that could affect negotiations and the final status. This persistence can but have dire consequences for the peace process and the future of the region. Egypt reiterates that the establishment of these settlements on the occupied Arab territories does not confer any legal backing or legitimacy on these settlements. Those that settle in them have no ownership rights and Arab negotiators have no obligation whatsoever towards them.

Fourthly, the Israeli Government is altering the demographic nature and composition of Al-Quds. None of its attempts to do so have been or will be accepted by the international community. They amount to clear sabotage of the peace process and a flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions 465 (1980) and 478 (1980), as well as of the Oslo agreement, as I mentioned earlier.

The future of Al-Quds is one of the subjects of the final status negotiations, as was agreed in Oslo. In conformity with the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel, in its capacity as the occupying Power, is obliged to respect the city's demographic character and composition as long as its final status has not been determined through negotiations.

Fifthly, the need to resume negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks cannot be ignored. Israel is called upon to resume negotiations on both tracks as soon as possible, on the basis of the Madrid framework of reference and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Moving from this gloomy picture on the political level to the field of regional economic cooperation, we find the Middle East/North African Economic Conference, which was held in the middle of last month, to be a landmark of great significance. It has become clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the movement towards peace in the Middle East is an integral whole and that normal economic relations between the Arab countries and Israel cannot be established, cannot develop and cannot flourish with the stalemate of the peace process and with the continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories, whether in the West Bank, the Golan or southern Lebanon.

It has become clear that progress in the bilateral negotiations between the Arabs and Israel and the advancement of economic cooperation in the region are two sides of the same coin. Israel will therefore not be able to reap the benefits of economic cooperation in the region if it continues to insist on dealing with its neighbours on the basis of concepts of occupation, hegemony, disregard for rights and non-implementation of international obligations.

A just and comprehensive peace is the basis for the achievement of security for all parties. In this regard, Egypt continues to call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This is supported by consensus by the international community represented in this General Assembly every year. Since President Mubarak's initiative in 1990, Egypt has called for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Yet, most regrettably, Israel continues to refuse to begin any negotiations on limiting nuclear armaments within the multilateral working group emanating from the Madrid Conference, in addition to refusing continually to take any confidence-building measures regarding inspection of its nuclear facilities in order to prove its sincerity.

The achievement of peace in the Middle East is an objective to which all the peoples of the region, Arab and Israeli alike, look forward. The Arab Summit held last June decided that the choice of peace is an strategic Arab choice. Yet if peace is removed from its framework or rendered devoid of its real content, then it will not be the balanced, just and comprehensive peace we hope to establish in the Middle East between the Arabs and Israel.

In conclusion, I reiterate Egypt's demands that Israel desist from and reverse the negative policies it has been pursuing and that it resume the implementation of its commitments, respect its international obligations and extend the hand of peace, if peace is indeed what it seeks to achieve. Otherwise, the international community will be called upon to fully shoulder its responsibilities in this regard to prevent the peace process from slipping into a maze of dead ends.

Mr. Owada (Japan): In the light of the most recent developments in the Middle East, and in particular in the light of the events that have been taking place between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the international community has grave concern over the prospects for the Middle East peace process. While

Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu, meeting in Washington, D.C., in early October, agreed to resume talks in the wake of the violence that broke out this past September in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, which threatened to utterly derail the peace process, we have seen few signs of concrete progress. Indeed, particularly as one considers the stalemate over the Hebron question, one is left with the sad impression that in the present circumstances no sense of optimism would seem to be warranted.

The Government of Japan strongly hopes that the parties concerned will recognize that the ongoing peace process provides the only realistic and reasonable option for the restoration of peace and stability throughout the Middle East. It is important that the agreements that have already been reached be steadily implemented, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the concept of land for peace. In order to contribute to that goal, Japan has been pursuing a three-pronged approach in its policy towards the Middle East. First, it has been participating actively in multilateral talks to create an environment conducive to peace. Secondly, it has been pursuing bilateral efforts, including numerous direct and intensive consultations conducted at the highest level of government, with the leaders of the parties concerned. And thirdly, it has been making financial contributions in the belief that it is important to show people in the region that the establishment of durable peace brings real dividends.

It is a considered view of Japan that the most recent outbreaks of violence in Jerusalem and other occupied territories are nothing other than a symptom of the frustration felt by the Palestinian people at the lack of the prospect for hope in their situation. While we in Japan strongly condemn acts of terrorism waged against innocent civilians by the suicide attacks of extremists in Palestine, which are aimed at sabotaging the progress made in the peace process since Madrid and Oslo, and while we also understand the resulting need of the Israeli authorities to tighten their security measures in order to protect their civilian population, it is undeniable at the same time that the closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has resulted in a sharp rise in unemployment, causing great economic hardship to the Palestinian people in those territories. It has also seriously reduced the revenues available to the Palestinian Authority.

Japan understands that Israel must ensure its own national security so as to enable its people to live in peace; nevertheless, it is important that it do so in a way that will not result in depriving the Palestinian people of their right to live in peace in the region. It is in this spirit that Japan wishes to urge Israel to lift the closure without further delay, while taking measures necessary for satisfying its own legitimate security needs.

With regard to the Syrian track, the Government of Japan is concerned over the fact that the Israeli-Syrian negotiations have been suspended since last February. I wish to urge strongly that both parties make their best efforts in order to resume the negotiations as soon as possible, so that the differences that exist between their respective positions may be overcome in the interest of achieving an overall peace.

There is no need to reiterate that Japan attaches great importance to the establishment of genuine peace and stability throughout the Middle East. In its earnest desire to advance peace, and in its deep conviction that international support to facilitate the process of negotiations by the parties directly involved would be essential to expediting the peace process, Japan has participated actively in the multilateral talks on the Middle East since they were set in motion in Madrid five years ago. Thus, Japan has contributed to the progress in the Working Group on the Environment as its Chairman, as well as in the capacity of Vice-Chairman of the Working Groups on Economic Development, Water Resources and Refugees. Japan has also been cooperating with other like-minded countries in nurturing confidence among the parties concerned by supporting initiatives for the Middle East/North African Economic Conference which was recently held in Cairo.

Japan believes that while all these efforts may not be part and parcel of the direct negotiations between the parties themselves, they have proved to be extremely constructive in the sense that such developments, with their enhanced prospects for regional cooperation in the areas of environment, tourism and economic joint ventures, can serve as a catalyst for the promotion of mutual confidence among the parties and for the creation of brighter prospects for the future of regional cooperation among the parties. Japan's recent bilateral efforts through numerous direct and intensive consultations with the leaders of the parties concerned, conducted at the highest level of Government, have also contributed greatly to assisting the peace process between the parties. From this perspective, I wish to make the point that the apparent reluctance, said to have been shown by some of the parties concerned, to participate in the multilateral talks is a source of great concern to Japan.

As I suggested earlier, the international community has a responsibility to contribute to the creation of an environment that will be conducive to progress in the peace process. For this purpose, since February 1966, Japan has been dispatching contingents of its self-defence forces to the Golan Heights to participate in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which has been in place in the area with the mandate of securing the peace and stability of the region for more than 20 years. The Japanese transport platoon deployed with UNDOF consists of 43 personnel from all ranks as well as two staff officers who are providing logistical support to the peacekeeping operation. This participation in UNDOF marks the fourth deployment of Japanese self-defence forces to participate in international efforts abroad. Assistance to the Palestinian people is also important in this regard. In this spirit, since 1993 Japan has contributed approximately $240 million in assistance to the Palestinians.

Let me now come to the draft resolution before us. My delegation wishes to commend the efforts of Norway, the United States and the Russian Federation in presenting the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process (A/51/L.40), of which Japan has become a sponsor. In adopting this text, the international community will reaffirm its full support for the ongoing efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and call on all parties concerned to accelerate the negotiations. My delegation has on several occasions emphasized that, to be adopted by the General Assembly, resolutions will have to be constructive in their effects. My delegation regards the present document to be one such resolution, inasmuch as it is expected to have the effect of fostering and reinforcing the current peace process.

In closing, I should like to reiterate Japan's urgent appeal to all the parties concerned to do everything in their power to break the current stalemate in the peace process. In so doing, they will restore international confidence in the sincerity of their intentions and renew a sense of hope among the people they represent for a peaceful and secure future.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The item on the situation in the Middle East has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for years now. General Assembly resolution 50/22 A of 4 December 1995 and Security Council resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980 remain particularly relevant.

Through resolution 50/22 A, the General Assembly determined that all legislative and administrative (measures and) actions taken by Israel that had altered or purported to alter the character and status of Jerusalem, in particular the so-called "Basic Law" on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, were null and void and must be rescinded forthwith. Through resolution 478 (1980), the Security Council decided not to recognize the "Basic Law" and called upon those States that had established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from that city.

During this fifty-first session the consideration of the item is of singular importance and significance to the United Nations, bearing in mind the particular current context of a regional peace process that is in constant change, as is the case in the Middle East.

The Palestinian people and the peoples of all occupied Arab territories are today confronting as never before a crucial moment in their history. This is because their genuine efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region have in recent months met with grave and hostile incidents provoked by the occupying Power with an aggressive and dangerous policy that threatens the course of the peace process in the region. It is common knowledge that all of this is possible thanks to the support Israel continues to receive from the United States, which has never concealed its determination to veto in the Security Council any resolution that contains firm statements against Israel's conduct in the Middle East.

It is necessary to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and to ensure that the letter and spirit of the provisions contained in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in the Cairo Agreement, in the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and all subsequent agreements are respected. It is also necessary to ensure compliance with the terms and stages of the peace process endorsed in those agreements.

In addition, it is necessary to ensure the greatest possible political, legal and moral support on the part of the United Nations for the cause of the Palestinian people and all the peoples of the occupied Arab territories and for the peace process in the Middle East. The question of Palestine is the core of the conflict in the Middle East and a real will to negotiate is necessary in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict as a whole.

Cuba reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to have an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and rejects measures aimed at changing the legal status and demographic composition of that city. Cuba demands the return of all the Arab territories occupied by Israel, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied strip of southern Lebanon. Cuba demands respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and the internationally recognized borders of the States of the region.

The Palestinian people and the peoples of all the Arab occupied territories need the General Assembly, the Security Council and the United Nations to play an effective and genuinely committed role in the peace process, on which the international community has focused its hopes.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): It is indeed regrettable that because of the climate of tension and the unstable security situation engulfing the region, the Middle East — or West Asia — has remained an area that has not fully benefited from the developmental process enjoyed by many other regions of the world. Coming after a series of much heralded but short-lived peace processes which for a long time promised nothing more than perhaps a lessening of the cycle of violence and hostilities, the historic breakthrough that led to the Madrid Conference five years ago offered for the first time serious prospects for change. It spurred new and unprecedented hopes and expectations that, at long last, there were real prospects for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Malaysia, therefore, could not but feel dismayed and seriously concerned that the policies of the new Israeli Government and its intransigent attitude have now threatened to put the entire peace process in jeopardy. My delegation, as well as others that have spoken earlier in this Assembly, dwelled at length on this during the debate on the question of Palestine — a key issue in the final resolution of the conflict in the Middle East — which ended yesterday.

It is not my intention to repeat what has been said, but to reiterate the fundamental point that has been made: if the present Israeli Government genuinely desires permanent peace in the region instead of permanent conflict, it must scrupulously honour the peace agreements that Israel has made with the Palestinian Authority. A radical departure from the course of the peace process, as the new Israeli Government seems bent on doing, will only dash these hopes and expectations yet again, thereby precipitating a new cycle of tension and warfare in the region which surely will not in anybody's interest, including Israel's.

Even as we focus on developments in the central issue of Palestine, other aspects of the Middle East issue equally merit the attention of the international community. The continued occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel is a constant reminder of the flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty. Such an occupation is a continuing provocation and is, in our view, militarily indefensible, as the military occupation of Lebanon by force cannot guarantee lasting peace and security for Israel.

Yet, we witnessed earlier this year a series of brutal attacks carried out by Israel on many towns and villages in Lebanon — including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) position in Qana — which resulted in an alarming number of civilian dead and wounded, severe damage to property and the displacement of thousands from their homes. The refugee problem that was created in the wake of these attacks has posed a serious challenge to the Lebanese Government as it grapples with the monumental tasks of rebuilding its war-ravaged economy and strengthening its political stability, which in recent years have achieved a measure of success.

Malaysia reaffirms its continued commitment to and unwavering support for Lebanon's quest for peace and security and an end to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Israel ought to have realized and accepted the fundamental truth that the key to its long-term security is not through the permanent occupation of neighbouring territories and the maintenance of a hawkish attitude towards its neighbours, but through the forging of a political compact with these neighbours. The territorial integrity of Lebanon must be an essential part of that compact.

We wholeheartedly welcomed the agreement reached between President Al-Assad and the late Prime Minister Rabin in June 1995 as an important breakthrough in resolving the problem between Syria and Israel. This was generally seen as a significant and positive development on the Syrian-Israeli peace track. Unfortunately, the hardline approach adopted by the new Israeli Government, particularly with regard to Israel's continued occupation of the Golan, has brought about an insurmountable impasse in the Syrian-Israeli peace track, thereby creating another regrettable setback in the overall Middle East peace process.

My delegation urges a resumption of the dialogue process as soon as possible, in the interest of creating an impetus towards the final resolution of the conflict. In the final analysis a permanent political settlement would necessitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Golan Heights, consistent with Security Council resolution 497 (1981). The sooner this fact is recognized and accepted by the Israeli Government, the brighter will be the prospects for a final resolution of the problem.

The existence of Israeli settlements in the occupied Golan Heights has also been a major stumbling block for the Syrian-Israeli peace process. The continued expansion of the settlements, which have changed the original demographic character of the area, is in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel's policy of continuing and expanding these Jewish settlements cannot but heighten suspicion and tension, thereby diminishing hopes for a lasting peace. Clearly, it is a policy designed not to assure but to provoke Syria, and therefore raises questions about Israel's real intentions and motivations in the region. My delegation strongly urges the Israeli Government to abandon this provocative and aggressive policy and to desist from building new settlements in the occupied Golan Heights in its efforts to create new realities on the ground.

On a more positive note, Malaysia welcomes the agreements reached between Jordan and Israel, which have led to the restoration of peace and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. This has provided a much needed positive environment conducive to the two countries devoting efforts and resources to development needs. This is indeed an encouraging development, one which Malaysia sincerely hopes will serve as a catalyst in generating much needed momentum for further progress in the peace process in the Middle East. For it is only through the resumption of talks based on mutual confidence and a spirit of accommodation that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the overall Arab-Israeli conflict can be achieved.

Malaysia has consistently called for a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict that would bring peace, security and stability to all the countries in the region, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions; a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement that would entail the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian territories, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied Lebanese territories, on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

Clearly, Israel must make a choice, whether it wants permanent peace or permanent hostility and warfare with its neighbours. If it desires peace, as it has often professed, then it will have to abandon its current intransigent attitudes and policies. It will have to replace them with approaches that will inspire hope and confidence rather than frustration and despair.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic enjoys traditional friendships in the Middle East, lively economic contacts with Arab States, and a very specific relationship with Israel. It naturally ranks among the staunch believers in the need to resume and continue the Middle East peace process.

The crucial task at this point is the timely implementation of existing arrangements: to complete the first stage of Israeli troop withdrawal, especially from Hebron, and to release Palestinian prisoners. Further steps should be taken to relieve the plight of Palestinians: removing road blocks, enabling safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, and eliminating obstacles to economic assistance and to implementing infrastructure-related projects.

The basic principles for a successful outcome are embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The focal points — Palestinian self-determination in all its aspects and the land-for-peace principle — are indispensable to a just, comprehensive and enduring peace.

We strongly condemn all acts frustrating the international effort peacefully to resolve the Middle East conflict. Terrorism represents a particularly great threat to peace. It is an unacceptable method of political struggle. It has shaken the very foundations of the Middle East processes and has damaged the interests of the young Palestinian Authority. The Czech Republic condemned in the strongest terms the wave of terrorism that affected Israel in February and March 1996.

This past September, when violence erupted once again in Jerusalem, on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, there was a feeling of genuine outrage in the Czech Republic. Its victims were deeply mourned. Of course, such incidents owe much to the prevailing atmosphere of frustration and irritation and to the feeling that the peace talks are deadlocked. It is hoped that the future will show that the root cause really is the absence of visible political results.

It is in the interest of all of us that the peace process be restarted and that all countries concerned begin to participate as soon as possible. That applies especially to Syria and Lebanon, but also to Iran and even Iraq. We will continue to work for the opening of talks between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon; the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Lebanon must of course be respected.

Security and stability in the Gulf are high on our list of priorities as well. This perspective informs our analysis of developments relating to Iraq, which focuses mainly on two aspects: first, the need to respect that country's territorial integrity and borders, and second, the need to speed up the implementation of the appropriate Security Council resolutions as a prerequisite for lifting sanctions. Creating the appropriate conditions for the full and speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) by the Iraqi Government is of particular importance.

The Czech Republic is committed to helping to strengthen the peace process and to enhancing trust among its participants. Since May 1996, it has actively participated in the multilateral negotiations as a member of the Regional Economic Development Working Group and of the Working Group on Water Resources. As the only post-communist European country to have become a donor State (at the conference of donor States on 10 January 1996 in Paris), the Czech Republic has pledged some $3 million for electrification of the Tubas region on the West Bank over the years 1995-1997. Czech assistance may well continue even after the project is completed. On 30 April 1996, during the Israeli "Grapes of Wrath" operation in south Lebanon, the Czech Republic responded to the call from the Security Council by donating CK 3 million to aid the State of Lebanon.

That has been our modest yet concrete contribution to the international effort to resolve the Middle East conflict and to alleviate the plight of the local population. Let me stress once more that it is in our interest that the Middle East process be pursued to a successful conclusion. For Israel, Palestinians and all their neighbours, peace talks are the only hopeful avenue to security and peace. Together with the guarantors of the peace process, the Czech Republic hopes to see Israel and its neighbours enjoy secure, internationally recognized and guaranteed borders and the Palestinians enjoy full respect for their legal rights.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The enormous progress attained in the past five years within the framework of the Madrid Peace Conference kindled in the Middle East and throughout the international community the hope of a new era of peace, reconciliation and cooperation in the region.

It must be recognized that that positive trend, achieved at the cost of considerable sacrifice, may be dangerously compromised by reverting to practices that in the past have led to nothing but violence and destruction. Indeed, the prolonged closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the isolation of the Arab quarter of Jerusalem, the resumption of the policy of confiscating Arab lands, the establishment and extension of settlements, acts of violence by armed settlers, constant lack of security on road links between the autonomous areas, acts of intimidation and punitive expeditions, the continuing detention of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and the delay in the withdrawal of Israel forces from Hebron and other areas on the West Bank are all serious violations of the peace accords.

In addition, they are responsible for heightened tension which may once again plunge the region into a cycle of uncontrolled violence. The opening of the archaeological tunnel in eastern Jerusalem has provided proof of the counterproductive nature of those policies.

On 28 September, the Security Council, speaking for the international community as a whole, expressed its deep concern at the tragic events that occurred at Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and the Gaza Strip and called for the cessation of acts that had resulted in the aggravation of the situation and had negative implications for the peace process.

That dangerous situation, which we believed to be behind us, has strengthened our conviction that there is no other way to achieve peace, security and stability in the region than through negotiation and the implementation of the accords freely entered into by the parties.

We emphasize the question of Palestine because we share the international community's conviction that it is at the very heart of the Middle East conflict and nothing lasting can be achieved until a settlement has been reached in accordance with international legitimacy established in the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It is therefore urgent to restore the climate of partnership on a basis of equality and mutual trust that made it possible for the peace negotiations to effect a qualitative change in relations among the various actors in the region.

The dawning in the Middle East and the new climate in Palestinian-Israeli relations quickly had a positive impact by breathing fresh life into the region, and as a result Israel and Jordan have established formal diplomatic relations and Syria and Israel have held several talks on substantive issues relating to the occupied Syrian Golan.

This climate has also given us reason to hope that Lebanese-Israeli talks will be initiated on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

At this critical juncture for the future of the region, we reiterate, together will all peace-loving and justice-loving countries, our appeal for the rapid resumption of the peace process and the implementation of the agreements concluded. As the President of the Republic of Senegal, Mr. Abdou Diouf, stressed in the message that he sent to commemorate the day of solidarity with the Palestinian people on 29 November 1996,

> "Today, more than ever, it is incumbent upon the sponsors of the peace process and the international community as a whole to redouble their efforts to preserve what has already been achieved and the hopes for peace that the Madrid initiative kindled in the hearts of the overwhelming majority of the people of the region and throughout the world."

The task that remains to be accomplished is, without doubt, huge, especially when we come to tackle the crucial stage of settling the sensitive final status issues. It is equally certain, however, that, if we are driven by the same faith and sense of history shown by the courageous leaders who initiated the Madrid process, there can be no insurmountable obstacle on the road to peace.

The second Middle East/North African Economic Summit, held at Amman, Jordan, in October 1995, and the one that took place recently in Cairo, demonstrated that, when peace is established once and for all, that part of the world is guaranteed a future of progress and prosperity. It is therefore up to all of us to work together, unremittingly, to maintain the momentum of the peace process by continuing to provide constantly renewed support to all those in the region who have opted for a firm commitment to the difficult path to peace. This peace, which we so earnestly desire, can be lasting only if it ensures for the Palestinian people the restoration and full exercise of its national legitimate rights.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We are participating at this stage of the debate in order to enjoy the opportunity to hear and reflect on the comments of the speakers who have preceded us. We approach this item with great respect. We sincerely believe that, with the conclusion of the cold war era, the conflict in the Middle East is the last great conflict that remains to be resolved. It is a great conflict because it contains all the elements needed to ignite the flame of violence and, in one way or another, it makes all of us feel involved.

However, a preliminary review of the comments that we have heard gives us reason to hope. The negotiating process has not stopped; it is continuing, although, of course, it should move faster. What, then, are the specific additional elements that enable us to feel optimistic?

The first is the end of the cold war. Clashes between extraregional hegemonic interests no longer exist — that obsessive characteristic of international life is a thing of the past. There is no room for extreme positions, which only bring about isolation and condemnation.

The second element is the indisputable and constant progress of democracy, which, together with the international promotion of human rights, transforms all peoples into participants in these vital negotiations. Thus, no secret agreements can take place behind the back of public opinion. The prospect of peace is a hope that transcends all boundaries.

Another important element is the need for improved opportunities for trade and cooperation among all the peoples of the region. This was made clear at the Middle East/North African Economic Summit, held in 1994 in Casablanca, Morocco, and was reaffirmed by the Summits of Amman, Jordan, in 1995, and Cairo, Egypt, in November 1996. All of these gatherings reflect a reality and a regional need that only now can be fulfilled.

Lastly, another vital factor is the fact that we have a negotiating mechanism in place. Thanks to the initiatives developed here at the United Nations by several Secretaries-General, the determination of Norway and the tireless diplomatic efforts of several States, it was possible to convene the Madrid Conference of October 1991 on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the 1993 meeting leading to the Washington Declaration of Principles, which was held under the auspices of President Clinton. On the basis of these instruments, and encouraged by a spirit of peace,

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, in Cairo on 4 May 1994, signed the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and, subsequently, other agreements of similar importance.

We do not believe that we should, at this specific time, indicate to the parties a particular course of action. However, we believe that the efforts of so many years must not be squandered and that the principles of the various Security Council resolutions must be respected. The peace efforts and the will to negotiate, reflected in the signing of these documents, must not be checked, but must instead be deepened and gain momentum. We must move beyond the current difficult moment and enter a stage that, on the basis of mutual commitments, will allow the parties to enjoy tangible achievements. The dialogue between Syria and Israel would seem to be indispensable in this context.

Our comments reflect only a genuine desire to protect peace and encourage the parties to put an end to this last great conflict. To a large extent, this desire results from the influence of the Jewish and Arab communities in Argentina, as both are founding communities of our nation. However, it is also a result of the fact that Argentina has been involved in every one of the great steps taken in the United Nations.

Ever since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), this item has been of constant concern to us, as reflected in our support for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and for the efforts of successive Secretaries-General to convene a peace conference on the Middle East.

That is why we also participated in the Casablanca, Amman and Cairo Summits on economic and social development and are contributing to the "White Helmets" initiative through a series of urban planning, sports training and animal health projects being implemented in the Gaza Strip.

As we participate once again in this debate on the Middle East, on the threshold of what can only be a genuine peace, we believe that it is necessary to recall those in the United Nations who have made individual efforts to mediate peace in the Middle East: Bernadotte, Bunche and Jarring — two Swedes and one American, who best represent the spirit of realism and commitment that must guide the parties today.

Mr. Butler (Australia): This Assembly takes up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East at a testing and troubled time for the Middle East peace negotiations. The succession of historic agreements — which began with the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 and was followed by the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), signed in Washington in September 1993, and the signing of the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in September 1995 — has laid a foundation for a settlement to a dispute which has bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours for so long and for too long has deprived the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity.

This year began with the successful conduct of the elections for the Palestinian Council and the Palestinian National Authority. Australia is proud to have assisted that process. But other developments followed: the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; the fighting in southern Lebanon in April; the Israeli elections in May; the Lebanese elections; the fighting following the opening of the Jerusalem tunnel; the Cairo conference. All of these events made an impact on an inevitably difficult situation. Today, nearing the end of the year, we find ourselves faced again with frustrations, with outbreaks of violence, with suspicions and resentments and with pent-up hostilities.

We have long thought that the peace process offers the only viable chance for securing a durable and just peace in which the people of the region can live together. The established processes for direct talks and for systematic negotiations serve the interests of all the parties.

For these reasons, my Government calls on all the parties to move forward with the peace process, to honour the obligations and commitments they have made, including on redeployment in Hebron and the commencement of substantive talks on final status issues. All parties must now recommit themselves to the search for a peaceful resolution of their differences. They must resume direct dialogue. The promise to negotiate solutions was given. Those negotiations must not be stalled or avoided. There is a shared responsibility to move the negotiations forward as far and as quickly as possible.

Australia's long-standing policy in the Middle East is based on a fundamental and immutable commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. The right of the Palestinian people to self-

determination is also a fundamental principle. No one other than the parties themselves can or should seek to prejudge or to prescribe the outcome of negotiations between the parties on the specific implementation of these rights.

Australia supports a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on the principle of land for peace and on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). To follow up on those resolutions, to complement and to fulfil them, we fully support the Madrid and Oslo agreements and the negotiating framework established under them.

We welcomed the successful convening and management of the Middle East/North African Economic Summit, held in Cairo last month, as a means of enhancing economic development in the region. The conduct of that meeting by President Mubarak and his ministers was a model of the sort of reasonable and common sense approach which could be applied to other regional challenges. President Mubarak looked to the future, not to the past. He considered how best to improve the welfare and quality of life of ordinary citizens throughout the Middle East. He talked about how best to face problems together, how best to find solutions together, how to enlist the active support of other regions of the world for the Middle East. We warmly commend and endorse his approach.

Given the importance of providing international economic support and practical assistance to the Palestinian National Authority, Australia has committed more than $A20 million in connection with the implementation of the Oslo accords. These funds are being spent principally on development activities crucial to the Palestinian people in recognition of their urgent needs. We are undertaking projects in such fields as education and training, health, legal infrastructure, water resources and income generation.

Australia has also been pleased to participate in the multilateral track of the peace process. We have been particularly involved in the working groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are both areas in which Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise and in which we judge we are able to make a contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region. Australia has also demonstrated its commitment to the cause of peace in the Middle East by its significant ongoing contribution to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai, the commander of which is currently an Australian.

Recalling the tragic events in southern Lebanon in April, we urge Israel, Syria and Lebanon to redouble their efforts to achieve a peace settlement based on the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Australia fully supported the conclusion of the Taif Agreement in 1989 and we express our hope that it will be fully implemented. We welcome the peaceful, successful conclusion of Lebanon's second national elections since the end of the civil war. We think that those elections and the reconstruction programme to which the Lebanese Government has recommitted itself provide an excellent foundation for the peaceful revival of the Lebanese economy.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all Middle East States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly those which operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, and all Parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their non-proliferation obligations. We are pleased that the most recently concluded arms control instrument — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — has already been signed by a significant number of Middle East States and we encourage all other regional States to follow suit.

Equally, universal adherence by States to both the Chemical and the Biological Weapons Conventions is critical and would make an important contribution to the security of the region.

Australia has been deeply concerned by the suffering the Iraqi people have endured in recent years. The responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people, or indeed its absence, rests with the Government of Iraq. We welcome Iraq's recent agreement to the terms of implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which will go some way towards providing basic necessities for the Iraqi people. We look forward to the Iraqi Government's final and full compliance with all mandatory Security Council resolutions.

We again urge Iraq to cooperate fully with the Special Commission. It is only by providing such cooperation that Iraq can receive certification acceptable to the international community that it is no longer building, testing, storing or hiding the worst kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

International support for negotiations, including that of Australia, has not changed. Australia urges the parties to build constructively on the foundations they themselves have laid; pursue direct talks; resolve the immediate stumbling blocks; make progress on a broader front; and, in so doing, regain and reinforce the habit of working productively together.

In conclusion, I reiterate that Australia has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to help, in constructive and practical ways, to achieve the goals of stability, prosperity and enduring peace in the Middle East region. We will continue in that commitment as far as proves to be practicable.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The peace process in the Middle East began with the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, which was held on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). At the core of these resolutions was the principle of land for peace. This process gained additional momentum with the historical turning point of mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, the signing of the Declaration of Principles by both parties in 1993 and the subsequent implementation agreements. These were followed by the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan, in addition to a number of other positive developments that began to change the face of the Middle East and pointed to a promising future for the region.

Unfortunately, this positive momentum has recently stalled. Events have backslid towards confrontation and tension. A serious threat now hovers over the process as a whole. This is a result of the policies pursued by the Government of Mr. Netanyahu in Israel, beginning with the general policies of his Government and ending with its attempt to retreat from the agreement on the redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron.

The most dangerous act of that Government has been its attempt to retreat from the foundation of the peace process and to reject the principle of land for peace. It resumed its colonialist settlement of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, then tried to circumvent all the agreements reached between the Palestinian and Israeli parties and to strip them of their content.

The right way to put the peace process back on track and to build on the achievements already attained would be full commitment to and prompt implementation of all agreements reached. Israel must refrain from creating new facts on the ground and from taking measures that are harmful to the Palestinians, such as the blockades imposed on their land and people.

The Syrian track could be set on course by a resumption of negotiations between the Syrian and Israeli parties at the point at which they stopped and by the respect of both parties for the understandings between them. We confirm here the necessity of a full Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan.

The Lebanese track could be pursued by resuming negotiations with a view to the prompt implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulates a full Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territories. We reiterate Lebanon's right to compensation for the crimes perpetrated against it in the course of Operation "Grapes of Wrath".

The peace process includes, *inter alia*, the negotiations of multilateral committees aimed at accelerating the process of change in the Middle East. It also includes the holding of annual economic conferences aimed at enhancing economic cooperation between all parties in the region and at improving their economies.

Once again, given the position and policies of the present Israeli Government and the deteriorating situation on the ground, this aspect of the peace process will be unable to continue. The Palestinian side has suspended its participation in multilateral committees, except for the Committee on Refugees. As far as regional economic cooperation goes, it is impossible for such cooperation to move forward so long as the Palestinian economy remains devastated by Israeli policies. It is simply not possible for practical political and economic reasons. The Government of Israel must clearly understand that it cannot enjoy the positive aspects of peace without implementing its obligations vis-à-vis that peace.

Arab national security is of central importance. At a time when we have agreed to give priority to the Israeli side with regard to protecting its security and expressed our readiness to work for security in the region in general, we cannot at the same time agree that Israel's

security should be ensured at the expense of Palestinian security or, more broadly, Arab national security. We seek a logical balance between the interests of all the parties concerned. In this connection, we reiterate our rejection of military blocs in the region. We also reject Israel's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

In our small region, the presence of nuclear reactors in Israel that are not subject to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards represents a threat to all peoples of the region, as does, indeed, the presence of nuclear weaponry, with all its dangerous ramifications. We call upon the international community to demonstrate the determination necessary to persuade Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to assist all parties in creating a region free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

The situation in the Arab Gulf region continues to pose problems. In this connection, we reiterate the need to respect the security, stability and territorial integrity of all countries of the Gulf region. We refer in particular to the necessity for non-interference in the internal affairs of the State of Bahrain and of recognizing the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands of Abu Musa and the Lesser and Greater Tunbs.

As for Iraq, we look forward to an end to the suffering of its population. We reiterate our adherence to Iraq's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty. We hope that the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) will be a step towards the implementation of other relevant resolutions of the Council and that normal relations will be restored between that fraternal country and the international community as a whole.

We also look forward to the establishment of normal relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and all its Arab neighbours, as well as between Iran and the Palestinians.

With regard to fraternal Yemen, we support its efforts peacefully to regain its sovereignty over the Red Sea islands of Hanish.

As for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, we call for an end to the sanctions imposed upon it and for a solution to the current crisis on the basis of initiatives taken by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity.

The Arab citizen is now looking to the Security Council, which is imposing full or partial sanctions solely on three Arab countries and upon no others, in spite of countless violations of international law elsewhere in the world. That citizen cannot but wonder about the justification and criteria for the continuation of such sanctions. We look forward to a solution to all the problems facing the Arab countries, based on our faith in joint Arab action and on the need to preserve Arab interests. That cannot but contribute effectively to building a new Middle East and achieving successful and effective partnership in the Mediterranean region, which, we hope, will become a true sea of peace and prosperity. In this connection, I commend the efforts that have been made in this sphere by the Arab countries and their attempts to find solutions to the question of the Middle East as a whole, in particular the fraternal Arab Republic of Egypt and the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union.

In spite of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the difficulties facing the peace process there, we continue to be committed to that process. We hope that it will restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with its capital Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We also hope that that will lead to the establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace throughout the Middle East region.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): This morning in the Assembly, we heard a statement by the Israeli representative that contained the usual fabrications and false claims at which the Israeli Government excels on a daily basis. In this case, it concerned a quotation attributed to our Ambassador to Egypt and the Arab League and a speech he made at the University of Alexandria in Egypt.

This is not the first time that the media have altered the words of a political official. The Israeli representative

should have mentioned the correction published the following day, 30 November, by the newspapers *Al-Ahram* and *Al Wafd*, in which the Syrian Ambassador denied the statements attributed to him and indicated the alteration of the substance of his lecture at the University of Alexandria. The Israeli representative also ignored the Ambassador's actual words in his lecture, which were to the effect that Syria was the first State at the Paris Conference to call for a ban on all weapons of mass destruction, especially the most dangerous of them: nuclear weapons.

Syria has made its strategic choice. That choice is peace. It is also the Arab choice. The Ambassador of Syria also made it clear that a just and comprehensive peace, within the Madrid frame of reference and based on the principle of land for peace, is achievable if Israel responds to international and Arab demands and proceeds to implement the resolutions of international legality. There is no need to refer here to the Ambassador of Syria's remarks on Israel's use of nuclear weapons. He did state that no Arab State possesses weapons of mass destruction. Arabs threaten no one with such weapons. All the Arab States in the region have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Israel has not.

It is Israel's possession of weapons of mass destruction — and the most lethal of them, as various international sources have noted when confirming Israel's possession of more than 200 nuclear missiles — that poses a threat to peace and security in the Middle East, the Mediterranean region and Europe.

Since the beginning of 1994, Syria has declared repeatedly, in this Hall, that its strategic choice is a just and comprehensive peace. It has declared its readiness to resume the peace process within the framework of the Madrid Conference and according to its principles, which are based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1983) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace, and to resume the peace talks from the point at which they stopped under the previous Israeli Government. Syria challenges the Israeli Government to accept these premises, to resume to the negotiations that started after the Madrid Conference in 1991 and to implement the commitment made by Israel to withdraw to the border of 4 June 1967.

In his statement, the Israeli representative also used the word "terrorism", knowing full well that Israel was the first to introduce terrorism in the region. President Hafez Al-Assad, in a televised interview on this subject, said that the people concerned with this question were the hundreds of thousands of people in Syria who had been uprooted from their homes and their homeland, some in 1948 and some in 1967. Forced to go to the Arab States adjacent to Palestine, they have been living, and continue to live, as displaced persons, struggling to establish their homeland in order to feel that they are a people no different from the other peoples of the world.

The President added that they had not gone to Syria of their own free will; they had been forced out of their homes. What were Syria, Lebanon or Jordan, the countries with the largest concentrations of such displaced persons, supposed to do? Throw them in the sea? Could the displaced persons be expected not to feel nostalgic about their countries, not to feel like all other peoples that love their homeland, of dignity and freedom in their own land and the need to return to it? Who could blame them if they struggled for the values cherished by and spoken about by all the peoples of the world?

Is it possible, he asked, to speak about human rights in one country while people who were displaced and uprooted from their countries decades ago and are still struggling to return to their homes are considered terrorists or criminals? Despite their suffering, those people living in Syria did not engage in any acts of violence from inside that country. If they did carry out any such acts, they did so from Palestine and southern Lebanon, not Syria. They were not the ones who carried out the actions inside the occupied Palestinian territories, he said, adding that they deserved to be called freedom fighters, not terrorists, because they were resisting the occupation of the Arab territories.

The song of the devil that Israel constantly sings makes it the last country to be entitled to speak of terrorism, particularly since the continued occupation by Israel of the Arab territories is the highest form of terrorism. A few moments ago, in the Assembly, representatives heard the Ambassador of Lebanon reviewing Israel's record, which is replete with acts of terrorism. Here, we would like to reaffirm that the massacres perpetrated by Israel in Palestinian territory and southern Lebanon, and even on the territory of Lebanon proper, represent the highest form of terrorism. Israel's persistence in carrying out its daily terrorist practices, whether in the occupied Palestinian territories, in the Lebanese territories or in the occupied Syrian Golan, is the clearest evidence of its lack of desire to live in peace with its Arab neighbours.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the representative of the Israeli regime made baseless allegations against my country in his statement. It is quite clear that the sole purpose of this disinformation campaign is to divert the attention of the international community from the continued occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel. We would like to reiterate our position and our humanitarian and moral support for the Lebanese people. Those people who are fighting the foreign occupation are exercising their legitimate rights, which are recognized by international law. By no means can they be labelled terrorists. The people of southern Lebanon are entitled to struggle for the right to liberate their homeland.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): This morning we heard a statement by the representative of the Israeli forces that are occupying southern Lebanon that described those people resisting the occupation of their territory as terrorists simply because they refuse to bow to Israeli oppression and because they are committed to freedom and to the liberation of their territory from these atrocities.

Does this representative, who wears the gloves of death, believe that he has hoodwinked us? Does he believe that the world does not see how, day by day, because of weapons of mass destruction, the inviolability of our territory and our independence and sovereignty are jeopardized? How can he so arrogantly violate General Assembly resolutions and those that are internationally binding? What kind of history will we be teaching our children when they read that a representative of an independent State of this international Organization one day showed complete disdain for the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights?

That same representative, while placing himself above the law, dares to invoke law and legality. How can he describe as terrorists those who are resisting the unjust force that has been used against their country? Is occupation by force not the very essence of terrorism? Can he believe that he is convincing the Assembly when he says that the aggression against the territory of our occupied country is an act of terrorism, whereas the bombardment of innocent people and their houses, their schools, their hospitals and their public utilities qualifies as self-defence? How can we allow the Israeli occupier to invoke the right to self-defence?

We cannot, on the eve of the twenty-first century, accept this type of logic in this forum, as all the peoples of the world have placed their hope in our Organization's ability to achieve international peace, security and stability. The Israeli forces' bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Qana, killed dozens of innocent people, including women, children and old people. Ambulances were bombed, as were other private vehicles that were fleeing the tanks. Houses were destroyed with people still in them; and hundreds of thousands of people were forced to migrate. This is not a figment of our imagination.

This took place before our very eyes. We witnessed the destruction of dozens of towns, power plants, bridges, schools and hospitals. Can this be considered self-defence, while an attack against a military vehicle containing Israeli soldiers, who are occupying our territory, is regarded as an act of terrorism? What kind of logic is this, and how long are we going to listen to such heretical talk?

The fact is that the continuing Israeli occupation is perpetuating this vicious circle of violence and destruction. The occupation must come to an end. The pretext of security zones is doomed to failure. Peace can be achieved only on the basis of respect for international law. The international community has for years been sending its own soldiers to keep the peace in our country.

My Government is committed to achieving peace and to assuming all of its responsibilities under international law when the Israeli occupation comes to an end. Why is this occupation continuing? Though they refuse to respect our position and heed our wisdom, how long can they go on ignoring the will of others? It is high time for all of us to recognize that a genuine peace can be established only on a just basis, and that this just basis cannot be achieved as long as the principles of international law are not respected.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform members that on Thursday, 5 December, in the afternoon, the General Assembly will resume consideration of agenda item 21, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", with a view to taking action on some of the draft resolutions submitted under that item.

On Friday, 6 December, in the afternoon, the General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda

item 41, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", and agenda item 44, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", also with a view to taking action on the draft resolutions submitted under these two items. In the same afternoon, the General Assembly will also take up agenda item 162, entitled "Proclamation of 7 December as International Civil Aviation Day".

On Tuesday, 10 December, in the afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the First Committee.

I should also like to inform members that the General Committee will meet on Friday, 6 December 1996, at 9.30 a.m. in Conference Room 4 to consider a request by a number of countries for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea", contained in document A/51/234 and Add.1.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.72

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

72nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 4 December 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 35 *(continued)*

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/51/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/678)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.33, A/51/L.34, A/51/L.35, A/51/L.36)

The President: I call on the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka of Senegal, to introduce draft resolutions A/51/L.33 to A/51/L.36.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to introduce the four draft resolutions — A/51/L.33, A/51/L.34, A/51/L.35 and A/51/L.36 — on the question of Palestine. These draft resolutions have been drawn up in the light of developments in the peace process. At the outset, allow me to announce that Cuba, Guinea, Malaysia and Qatar have joined as sponsors of the four draft resolutions.

The first three draft resolutions — A/51/L.33, A/51/L.34 and A/51/L.35 — renew the mandates entrusted to the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the Secretariat's Department of Public information to continue their endeavours and programmes in their respective spheres of competence while taking current developments into consideration. The corresponding financial provision has been made in the programme budget for 1996-1997.

In draft resolution A/51/L.33, the General Assembly welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the subsequent implementation agreements, in particular the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995. The Assembly reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy.

As can be seen in the text, the General Assembly considers that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People can continue to make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the peace process and the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period.

The Assembly endorses the recommendations of the Committee contained in its report and requests the

96-86975 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or to the Security Council, as appropriate. It also authorizes the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it may consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments. The Committee is also to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people.

The General Assembly also requests the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations and to take the necessary steps to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work. It requests the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it the relevant information and documentation which they have at their disposal.

In draft resolution A/51/L.34 on the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, the General Assembly considers that the Division continues to make a useful and constructive contribution through the organization of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, as well as through its various informational activities, including the further development of the electronic Information System on the Question of Palestine. The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources in order to discharge the tasks that have been entrusted to it.

In draft resolution A/51/L.35 on the work of the Department of Public Information, the General Assembly notes that several defined provisions of the special information programme on the question of Palestine are yet to be implemented, and stresses the importance of implementation of all provisions of the programme. The General Assembly considers that the special information programme is very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in general. It requests the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to continue the programme with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

Draft resolution A/51/L.36 is entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". In this draft resolution, the General Assembly reaffirms the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects. It expresses its full support for the ongoing peace process which began in Madrid and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, as well as the subsequent implementation agreements. It expresses the hope that the process will lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It stresses the necessity for the immediate and scrupulous implementation of the agreements reached between the parties and the commencement of the negotiations on the final settlement. Finally, the draft resolution calls upon the concerned parties, the co-sponsors of the peace process and the entire international community to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the success of the peace process.

The General Assembly stresses the need for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination, and the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. It also stresses the need for resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees in conformity with its resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. It urges Member States to expedite the provision of economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people during this critical transition period. It emphasizes the importance for the United Nations to play a more active and expanded role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. It requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, for the promotion of peace in the Middle East region.

The four draft resolutions that I have just introduced were formulated to contribute to the peace process and to promote every concrete effort aimed at a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Convinced that it is now necessary not only to maintain, but also to strengthen our solidarity with the Palestinian people, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I invite all delegations present to reaffirm their support for that objective and to adopt a constructive approach by voting in favour of the draft resolutions before the General Assembly.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/51/L.33 through A/51/L.36.

I now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting. May I remind them that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): Although Turkey supports draft resolution A/51/L.36, we believe that it does not reflect all the obstacles on the road to lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. We believe that one of the fundamental threats to the peace process is terrorism. We would therefore like to emphasize the urgent need for countries that lend their support to terrorism immediately to stop that illegal and destructive practice and refrain from using terrorism as a foreign policy instrument.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation believes that it is vital to support and encourage the full resumption of the peace process, which will lead to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, and to contribute as effectively as possible to strengthening the mechanisms of current bilateral and multilateral negotiations. In that regard, we express our support of the parties involved in reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict. That solution will include full recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Ecuador will vote in favour of the draft resolutions on agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine", in particular draft resolution A/51/L.36, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". Our positive vote, based on the reasons I have just expressed, reflects Ecuador's unwavering position of rejection and repudiation of the occupation or annexation of territory by force, as well as its firm conviction that a peaceful and negotiated settlement of territorial disputes between States must be reached without the threat of force, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law.

Ms. Arnon (Israel): Since September 1993, Israel and the Arabs have taken historic steps forward in the peace process. Major developments have included the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 and its subsequent agreements: the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed at Cairo on 4 May 1994; the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, signed on 29 August 1994; the Interim Agreement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995; and the redeployment of Israel Defence Force troops from all major cities in the territories. On 14 September 1993, Israel and Jordan signed the Common Agenda, which led to the subsequent Washington Declaration, signed on 25 July 1994 and culminated in the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994. In addition, bilateral and multilateral negotiations continue and we look forward to progress on all tracks, including the continuing talks with the Palestinians on permanent status.

Draft resolution A/51/L.33 endorses and authorizes the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people. Draft resolution A/51/L.34 does the same with the regard to the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. Israel has opposed the existence of these bodies since their inception. They have obstructed dialogue and understanding through a one-sided and distorted portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, they stand in contradiction to the very principles upon which the peace process is based. In addition, these bodies expend valuable resources that should be devoted to more constructive activities, such as supporting social and economic development that would benefit Palestinians.

Draft resolution A/51/L.35 requests the Department of Public Information, among other things, to disseminate information on all the activities of the United Nations system relating to the question of Palestine. We believe that this, too, would be a needless expenditure of valuable resources that could be put to better use.

Draft resolution A/51/L.36 attempts to predetermine the outcome of negotiations on issues relating to permanent status, in contradiction of the Declaration of Principles. Like draft resolution A/51/L.35, this draft resolution is fraught with internal contradictions. On the one hand, it claims to support the peace process that began in Madrid; on the other, it attempts to undermine the fundamental principle of direct negotiations without preconditions, upon which the Madrid process is based. We believe that Member States that claim to support the peace process have a responsibility to oppose this draft resolution, as it strikes at the essential principles on which the process is based. Accordingly, Israel will vote against the draft resolutions under this agenda item. We encourage others who support the peace process to do the same.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/51/L.33, A/51/L.34, A/51/L.35 and A/51/L.36.

We turn first to draft resolution A/51/L.33, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/51/L.33 was adopted by 104 votes to 2, with 46 abstentions (resolution 51/23).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chad, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique and Sierra Leone informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegations of Costa Rica and Côte d'Ivoire had intended to abstain.]

The President: We turn now to draft resolution A/51/L.34, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad

and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/51/L.34 was adopted by 107 votes to 2, with 46 abstentions (resolution 51/24).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique and Sierra Leone informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn now to draft resolution A/51/L.35, entitled "Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of)

Draft resolution A/51/L.35 was adopted by 157 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (resolution 51/25).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chad and Mozambique informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: We turn now to draft resolution A/51/L.36, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Costa Rica, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of)

Draft resolution A/51/L.36 was adopted by 152 votes to 2, with 4 abstentions (resolution 51/26).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Chad and Mozambique informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Before calling on the first speaker in explanation of vote after the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): My Government opposes the four resolutions that have been introduced under agenda item 35, entitled "Question of Palestine". These resolutions are remnants of an earlier time, which has been overtaken by events on the ground in the Middle East. Three of these draft resolutions, contained in documents A/51/L.33, A/51/L.34 and A/51/L.35 and their addenda, promote institutions whose activities and approach to Middle East peace are unbalanced and outdated. They do nothing to support the process of direct negotiation now under way between the parties concerned, and they scarcely take note of the considerable achievements of the negotiating partners to date.

What these resolutions do instead is drain away $7 million each year in precious financial and human resources that could better serve the cause of economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The international community has clearly stated its support for assisting the Palestinians in building needed self-government institutions, economic infrastructures and social services. We believe the General Assembly should consider carefully whether the activities supported by these resources represent the most effective use of United Nations resources in support of these objectives.

Seven million dollars is a great deal of money in the West Bank and Gaza. According to the Palestinian Public Investment Programme and Funding Needs for 1997, $7 million could fund two agricultural training centres, one each in the West Bank and Gaza. It could construct a new cardiac centre in Nablus, or a community hospital in Rafah. Seven million dollars could build a new system of local roads in the northern Gaza Strip, or underwrite a project to rehabilitate shelters in refugee camps. All of these projects are currently unfunded by the donor community.

The $7 million that now funds the activities of obscure United Nations committees and departments that purport to be dedicated to the welfare of Palestinians could make a real difference in the lives of ordinary people. The question is simply this: Do we want actually to help Palestinians, or would we prefer merely to talk about helping Palestinians? In a reform-minded era in

which every dollar counts, there can be only one answer. We urge that funds go instead to the activities of other United Nations organizations, such as the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Development Programme, that will carry out programmes directly benefiting the Palestinian people.

The draft resolution contained in documents A/51/L.36 and Add.1, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", injects the General Assembly into issues that are under direct negotiation between the parties. This, in our view, is inappropriate and unhelpful. Let us leave to the parties the settlement of their differences in the context of a negotiating process to which they have given their agreement; what they need from the General Assembly is our support and encouragement, not second-guessing and side-taking. At this important moment, we want to support that process of negotiation rather than focus on issues or statements that divide and polarize.

The United States strongly supports the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. To our regret, the unbalanced drafts before us complicate the achievement of that objective. We, therefore, voted against these four resolutions.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation voted for the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.36, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". However, our vote in favour of the draft resolution does not mean that we support or reject the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, and referred to in the ninth and tenth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

As for the eighth preambular paragraph of the resolution, we would like to reiterate that the full withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab territories, the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, and implementation of the principles and the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, is the correct path for guaranteeing that all States in the region will be able to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 33 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/543, A/51/678-S/1996/953)

Draft resolutions (A/51/L.38, A/51/L.39 and A/51/L.40)

The President: I now call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/51/L.38 and A/51/L.39.

Mr. Rahman Salah (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Egyptian delegation has the honour this year of submitting to the General Assembly draft resolution A/51/L.38 on Jerusalem.

This draft resolution normally enjoys the support of the members of the General Assembly, as it recalls the responsibility of the international community towards the city of Jerusalem and reiterates the need for the implementation of all Security Council resolutions pertaining to the inalienable and legitimate rights of the city of Jerusalem.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution recalls the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Holy City of Jerusalem and declares null and void all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel in Jerusalem, in particular the so-called "Basic Law".

Furthermore, the operative section states that the decision of Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem is null and void.

In the second and third paragraphs, the draft requests that States refrain from transferring their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980). In its final paragraph, the draft requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on the implementation of the present draft resolution.

This draft resolution is particularly important because we are witnessing a real crisis in the peace process. Those who desire peace need the full support of the General Assembly.

The Egyptian delegation also takes pleasure in submitting to the General Assembly this year draft resolution A/51/L.39 on the Syrian Golan. The draft resolution, in its preamble, reaffirms the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by force, as well as the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the occupied Syrian Golan. It also notes the convening at Madrid of the Peace Conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In operative paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, the General Assembly declares that Israel has failed so far to comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

The authors of the draft resolution hope that they will continue to obtain support from the international community based on the principles underlying the peace process begun at Madrid.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/51/L.38, A/51/L.39 and A/51/L.40.

I shall now call on those representatives wishing to make statements in explanation of vote before the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to explain Lebanon's vote on the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.40, entitled "Middle East peace process".

First, despite the fact that the sponsors of the draft resolution have admitted that no progress has been made in this process since the item was discussed last year, expressing no satisfaction in that regard, they have ignored the general conclusion reached by all parties concerned that the peace process is threatened as a result of Israeli intransigence.

Secondly, we regret that the sponsors of the draft resolution did not take into consideration proposals aimed simply at recalling the need to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978). I should like to recall that Lebanon, which participated in the Madrid Peace Conference and in the subsequent bilateral negotiations in Washington, calls for the implementation in full of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Lebanon reaffirms its sincere desire for the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the area. Israel must implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which it has refused to do for the last 18 years, and in particular since the peace process began five years ago.

The continued Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, the daily acts of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli forces against Lebanese civilians, the declarations of Israeli officials rejecting the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and the violent situation in southern Lebanon all confirm the need to implement this resolution, which can guarantee an end to the violence. The repeated attacks by the Israeli army in the area north of the so-called security zone established by Israel clearly show the failure of the concept of and the logic behind this zone. We firmly believe that the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) is the only guarantee of peace and security in southern Lebanon.

That Security Council resolution is clear. Since 1978, the Security Council has repeatedly renewed the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Peace in the Middle East will never prevail so long as Israel occupies southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan. Israel must withdraw from southern Lebanon, in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and from the Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), if we are to realize a full, just and comprehensive peace in the area.

My delegation would like to reiterate Lebanon's firm belief in the peace process in the Middle East on the basis of land for peace. We believe that it is very important to resume negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks from the point at which they stopped, and that a full, just and comprehensive peace requires Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan, to the line of 4 June 1967, and from southern Lebanon to beyond its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with resolution 425 (1978).

Lebanon, which reiterates its commitment to the peace process, would draw attention to the fact that

Security Council resolution 425 (1978) does not call for any synchronization between its provisions and the peace process. Lebanon joined in that process with the complete and sincere desire to realize peace in the Middle East. However, we have always stressed that Israel must implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) without tying it to progress in the peace process that began with the Madrid Conference and as set forth in the letter of assurances between the two sponsoring Powers and Lebanon, which noted that implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) is not linked to or conditioned on progress in the peace process.

Thirdly, we would like to repeat our objection to the synchronization of the bilateral and multilateral negotiations, since the latter will not bear fruit so long as Israel remains in the occupied territories and has not withdrawn. We see no advantage to attempting to force normalization while the Israeli occupation of the territories continues. Such attempts will be neither useful nor fruitful so long as the bilateral tracks have not achieved the desired results, in keeping with international law and the Madrid principles. Any attempt to impose normalization prior to a commitment to the principle of land for peace will be doomed to failure.

Lebanon, a principal participant in the peace process in the Middle East, will vote against the draft resolution that has been submitted. The international community will fully understand the significance and importance of our vote, which clearly and unequivocally demonstrates that our attitude in the bilateral peace process is firm and unshakable. We call once again for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) so that we can meet this challenge.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Lebanon's total commitment to the peace process, desiring as we do a just, permanent and comprehensive peace in the region.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again, I should like to state that the delegation of Ecuador feels it essential to support and encourage full implementation of the peace process in the Middle East, in keeping with the Madrid Peace Conference on 1991 and to make an effective contribution to strengthening the bilateral and multilateral negotiating mechanisms now under way. In this connection, we also support the parties involved in attempting to find a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Ecuador will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 33, "The situation in the Middle East".

I should like to stress that a vote in favour of draft resolution A/51/L.39, "The Syrian Golan", reflects Ecuador's unswerving decision to reject and refuse to recognize the annexation of territories acquired by force as well as its firm conviction that a peaceful and negotiated settlement must be found without the threat of force — I repeat, without the threat of force — to the territorial problems that exist among States, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): My explanation of vote concerns draft resolution A/51/L.39. Although Turkey will support the draft resolution, I would like to clarify the position of my delegation on one aspect of the situation in the Middle East.

There are several reasons that have caused the current impasse in the peace process. It is not fair to assign all responsibility to one of those variables or to one of the countries involved. All the factors contributing to the existing stand-off have to be dealt with effectively.

We would like to underline once again our strong belief that one of the most important obstacles to the peace process is terrorism. There is an urgent need for the countries of the region that give their support and encouragement to terrorism to stop immediately the use of that destructive and unscrupulous practice as a means of advancing their foreign policy interests.

The President: I have received requests to speak from the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation. Earlier, the assumption was that the requests related to statements in explanation of vote before the voting. However, it has now been explained that the requests by Syria and the Russian Federation have to do with an effort to submit an amendment to a draft resolution.

I would advise both delegations that we are already in the process of taking action on the draft resolution concerned. It would be unusual at this juncture to think in terms of offering an amendment.

I call on the representative of Swaziland, who has asked to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): I was getting confused when suddenly the President stopped convening and presiding over the Assembly.

However, in support of the President's comments, my delegation objects with regard to amending draft resolutions on which action is already being taken. When we come to take action on draft resolutions, we do so after we have consulted with our Governments.

If an amendment comes at the eleventh hour, are you sure beyond a shadow of a doubt, Mr. President, that when we vote we shall be taking positions in full consultation with our capitals? We are representing Member States here. Our Governments have a right to know what we are doing, and immediately after this meeting I shall report to Swaziland on the action I have taken. With regard to those delegations that intervene at the eleventh hour, I would urge you, Sir, to use your veto power, if you have such a power, to veto the amendment so that we can continue to take action.

The President: This is the General Assembly, not the Security Council. We have no veto power here. I am sure that the Assembly has taken the point of view of the delegation of Swaziland into account.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank you most earnestly, Mr. President, for clearing up the confusion caused by the Secretariat. My delegation requests that a slight amendment be made to draft resolution A/51/L.39, before the voting and explanations of vote. The Secretariat misunderstood, because my delegation was already on the list to explain its vote before the vote, which is how the mistake happened.

In reply to the Ambassador of Swaziland, whose explanation and whose position we welcome, we would like to thank him for his excellent statement. I would like to say, however, that this amendment would, I think, be welcomed by his Government and himself. If you will allow me now, I would like to submit this amendment to operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/51/L.39.

The paragraph begins: "Demands that Israel resume ...". We would like to delete those words and replace them with "Calls for the resumption of the talks ...". The rest of the draft resolution would remain the same.

My delegation would like to apologize to all delegations and thank them for their spirit of understanding. If you will allow me now to explain my vote, Mr. President, I shall do so, but if you deem it necessary, I can speak later.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I asked to speak, Mr. President, in order to explain my vote and not to submit an amendment. I am prepared to do this when you think it is possible. If appropriate, I am ready to speak now.

In connection with the oral amendment just proposed by the representative of Syria on behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/51/L.39, namely the amendment to operative paragraph 5, which would now begin with the words "Calls for the resumption of the talks ...", I would like to point out that this is a constructive proposal by the sponsors, and we are grateful to them for the suggestion.

Furthermore, as a sponsor of the Middle East peace process, Russia believes that the issues mentioned in draft resolution A/51/L.39 on the implementation of the principle of land for peace will in fact come to the fore in the course of direct Arab-Israeli talks, which should be resumed immediately. Bearing in mind all these considerations, my delegation was able to support this draft resolution and shall vote in favour of it.

The President: I hope the matter is quite clear to all delegates here. I am not trying to play on words, but I am advised that what has been proposed is an oral revision, as distinct from an amendment, and if all the sponsors — Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen — can support the oral revision, we can proceed to take a vote on this draft resolution. Any objections? I see none. Is the representative of Swaziland satisfied?

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): Yes, the sins are forgiven. I am comfortable now.

The President: I am glad that we are no longer sinners. We shall now proceed. Syria still has a request to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation will vote against draft resolution A/51/L.40, entitled "Middle East

peace process", for the following reasons. We have tried to convince the sponsors of the draft resolution of the need for the text to reflect the status quo in the peace process, the obstacles raised by the Israeli Government at the moment, as well as its non-compliance with the principles underlined at the Madrid Conference and other commitments and principles agreed by all parties aimed at providing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East region. Thus the international community represented in the General Assembly should adopt a resolution reflecting the deterioration in the situation surrounding the peace process.

The international community should send an urgent message to the Israeli Government that its current positions are the cause of the freeze in the peace process.

We have drawn the attention of the sponsors to the fact that the adoption of a routine resolution does not at all reflect recent developments or the concerns of the international community on the pause in the peace process. This is not going to break the current deadlock in the Syrian track of the peace process. It is extremely important that this draft resolution urge Israel to resume negotiations for peace on Lebanese and Syrian tracks because a just and lasting peace cannot be achieved without them.

Secondly, the draft resolution before us refers only to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), but not to resolution 425 (1978), despite our efforts to have it included. All of these resolutions are the basis and frame of reference for the establishment of the peace process. Finally, Syria cannot welcome a peace process that is not based on the principles of international legality and of land for peace.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

We have also heard the oral revision made with the consent of the sponsors. I will read out the oral revision to operative paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/51/L.39:

> "Calls for the resumption of the talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and respects the commitments and guarantees reached during the previous talks."

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/51/L.38, A/51/L.39 and A/51/L.40.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/51/L.40: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

We shall now turn to draft resolution A/51/L.38 entitled "Jerusalem".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:
Israel

Abstaining:
Bahamas, Barbados, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nicaragua, Nigeria, Samoa, Swaziland, United States of America

Draft resolution A/51/L.38 was adopted by 148 votes to 1, with 13 abstentions (resolution 51/27).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Mozambique informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution A/51/L.39 is entitled "The Syrian Golan".

We shall now begin the voting process on draft resolution A/51/L.39, as orally revised.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:
Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:
Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:
Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela

Draft resolution A/51/L.39, as orally revised, was adopted by 84 votes to 2, with 71 abstentions (resolution 51/28).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Mozambique informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Draft resolution A/51/L.40 is entitled "Middle East peace process".

We shall now begin the voting process.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:
Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon,

Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic

Abstaining:

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Sudan

Draft resolution A/51/L.40 was adopted by 159 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions (resolution 51/29).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Mozambique and Seychelles informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote. May I remind them that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by representatives from their seats.

Mr. Baumanis (Latvia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): My Government is pleased once again to have cast its vote in favour of the annual resolution on the Middle East peace process. This resolution is a clear endorsement of the efforts the parties have made, often against long odds, to keep moving forward in their mutual quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is an acknowledgement that their commitments deserve the generous support and encouragement of this Assembly, without bias and without reservation. It highlights the positive role the United Nations has to play in the Middle East peace process and makes a significant contribution to continuing the momentum which the process has developed in the five years since the Madrid Conference.

The same cannot be said of the other two resolutions included under this agenda item. We believe that the resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan", like others that deal with the long-standing Arab-Israeli dispute, serves only to complicate the achievement of a mutually acceptable outcome.

Syria and Israel have committed themselves to a negotiating process to resolve their differences and achieve a lasting peace agreement. The General Assembly can only make this goal more elusive by injecting itself into issues that the parties have agreed will be decided in face-to-face negotiations. As a sponsor of the peace process begun at Madrid, the United States is firmly committed to helping the parties compose their differences. However, we do not believe that resolutions such as these are conducive to creating an atmosphere of trust and reconciliation that will help this process succeed.

As has been our practice in the past, the United States abstained in the vote on the resolution concerning Jerusalem. Jerusalem must remain undivided and its future should be decided through permanent status negotiations, as agreed by the parties in their 13 September 1993 Declaration of Principles. This Assembly should not inject itself into this most complex and emotional issue.

Ms. Rubinstein (Israel): My delegation welcomes the adoption of the resolution entitled "Middle East peace process", also known as the "positive resolution", which

expresses the support of the international community for the ongoing peace process in our region.

Israel wishes to take this opportunity to call once again on our neighbours to renew negotiations without preconditions. Only through direct talks will we be able to work out the issues which remain between us. Israel also calls upon the States of our region that have not participated in the multilateral talks to do so without further hesitation.

It had been our hope that this resolution would include, among its other elements, an explicit condemnation of terrorism in all its forms. Terrorism, as defined earlier this year at the Summit of the Peacemakers in Sharm el-Sheikh, is one of the main obstacles to achieving peace in our region. It is also my delegation's belief that the process of democratization can assist the progress towards peace, human rights and prosperity for the entire Middle East.

Regarding resolution 51/28, I would like to quote from the letter of invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference.

> "The United States and the Soviet Union are prepared to assist the parties to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, through direct negotiations ... based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and [illegible]8 (1973)."

No other resolutions are cited in the invitation. Attempts to link the invitation to other resolutions relating to the Middle East and the principle of land for peace are misleading and counter-productive to the achievement of peace.

With regard to resolutions 51/27 and 51/28, my delegation believes that the issues of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights should be addressed within the framework of direct negotiations between the parties themselves. The General Assembly is not the correct forum for the discussion of these issues. Any attempt by the United Nations to adopt such resolutions will only serve to prejudge the outcome of the negotiations.

Mr. Guyot (France) (*interpretation from French*): Like last year, while France voted in favour of the text entitled "Middle East peace process", it did not co-sponsor the draft resolution for reasons that are well known to the General Assembly. We feel in point of fact that the absence of any reference to Security Council resolution 425 (1978) is a regrettable lacuna. France attaches particular importance to respect for the principles set out in that resolution and would have preferred the United Nations on this occasion to reaffirm its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

Mr. Yassin (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation has frequently expressed its firm belief in the possibility of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East in the interests of all States in the region. We also believe that peace in the Middle East is indivisible. That, too, is in the interests of all States of the region. Peace must include all tracks and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

From this rostrum, my delegation has often called on Israel to implement the agreements it has entered into. We have referred to the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference on which the peace process is based. We have also stressed the need to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). We would like once again to reassert that any efforts to promote a partial peace will not facilitate progress towards peace in the region.

Accordingly, my delegation believes that resolution 51/29, entitled "Middle East peace process", is deficient. It does not refer to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories in southern Lebanon, nor does it mention the obstacles that continue to hinder the peace process. That is why my delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 51/29.

Mr. Abderahman (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am speaking on behalf of the Arab States that voted in favour of the resolution on the Middle East peace process.

The Arab Summit in Cairo last June made peace a strategic choice — a choice that it has fully supported. This was reflected in the statements of the Arab States that participated in the debate on this agenda item. Most of the Arab States voted in favour of the resolution as an expression in principle of its support of the peace process. However, we wish to place on record and stress the following points in which we found the resolution lacking. We did make relevant proposals on these points in the drafting of the resolution, but they were not taken into consideration.

First, regrettably, the resolution includes no reference to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which represents the central pillar of the negotiations between Lebanon and Israel.

Secondly, we believe that the difficult circumstances and dangerous daily developments on the ground caused by the behaviour of the Israeli Government to co-opt and derail the peace process. This should have been clearly reflected in this year's resolution. We were duty-bound in this resolution to call firmly on the Israeli Government to implement in full all the agreements concluded between the two parties. Failure to implement those agreements will lead to a lack of confidence in and support for the peace process.

Thirdly, the resolution lacks any reference to the dangerous, negative and destructive impact of Israel's decision to resume building settlements in the occupied Arab territories. The countries on whose behalf I speak believe that this could completely undermine the whole peace process. Our countries hope that the adoption of the resolution this year and our votes in its favour will not be interpreted as an acceptance of the status quo.

We reaffirm that the current status of the peace process cannot continue. Negotiations are not an objective in and of themselves. Agreements are totally useless unless they are implemented and failure to do so could seriously jeopardize the future of the peace process in which we are all interested.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): Before I qualify the position my delegation has taken, I have a statement that was circulated by the delegation of Israel. The last paragraph, if I may be allowed to reflect on it, reads as follows:

> "The General Assembly is not the correct forum for the discussion of these issues. Any attempt by the United Nations to adopt such resolutions will only serve to prejudge the outcome of the negotiations." *(supra, p. 83)*

My comment on behalf of my delegation on the lines I have read out is this: I humbly — I repeat, humbly — on behalf of my delegation implore the delegation of Israel to cooperate with the partners in the peace initiative with a view to finding a lasting settlement in the Middle East.

There is no Member State that can tell the General Assembly that it is not the right forum to discuss any matter relating to peace and security, no matter what club or what part of the world it belongs to. Therefore, I appeal that, as we try to support a peaceful settlement, we not feel threatened. We are speaking within our rights and we should do so as long as there is a United Nations which is serving the interests of all Member States.

I think I have sounded that warning.

My friends — and I call them my friends; they know why I am saying my friends — the Kingdom of Swaziland, if I may reveal this, has been with Israel through the toughest times of times. They know our spirit and letter in our partnership.

Coming to the explanation of our vote, I want to say that, in the voting on resolution 51/27, the Kingdom of Swaziland abstained; in the voting on resolution 51/28, the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland again abstained; in the voting on resolution 51/29, my delegation voted in favour. This is the qualification: It is our policy that, when your neighbours are facing a contentious situation, you bring them together. You serve as an office of goodwill. This is what we are attempting to do with all the parties in the Middle East: to find a lasting, peaceful resolution that lets them continue to open the doors, to come together, to discuss faithfully and to agree faithfully.

In doing so, my delegation urges that the letter and spirit of the conferences of 1993 and September 1995 and the Madrid Conference should continue to be respected with a view to finding a lasting solution in the Middle East. We therefore humbly suggest that the parties to the conflict should know that to do otherwise would not be in the interest of peace in the Middle East.

No one wins a war. In the process of war, children die and innocent persons suffer. In the interests of children and innocent persons in the Middle East, my delegation therefore urges that negotiations with a view to finding a lasting solution should continue and the efforts of those partners who are attempting at all costs to bring peace to the Middle East should be supported by the United Nations and the parties involved.

Mr. Escovar Salom (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As in previous years, Venezuela voted in favour of resolutions 51/27 and 51/29 on Jerusalem and the Middle East peace process, respectively, under the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East.

We would like to emphasize, however — in accordance with statements made by the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American Conference recently held in Chile — that it is our position that the problems of that region must be solved in accordance with the constructive spirit of the agreements concluded between the parties involved, while protecting the legitimate rights of all the inhabitants and guaranteeing access to holy places, in full respect of international law.

We feel — as stressed in operative paragraph 9 of resolution 51/29 — that an active role of the United Nations in the Middle East peace process can make a positive contribution, especially in the context of the numerous resolutions that the General Assembly and the Security Council have adopted on this issue since 1947, including the question of the special status of the City of Jerusalem.

Mr. Marsico (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As it did in 1995, the delegation of Argentina has abstained in the voting on resolution 51/28. The Argentine Republic was unable to endorse the resolution on the Syrian Golan because of the reference in operative paragraph 6 to "the line of 4 June 1967". In no way — I repeat, in no way — does our action change the Argentine Republic's consistent position of absolute and total rejection of the acquisition of territory by force.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We wish to place on record our great satisfaction at the positions clearly expressed today by the representatives of the international community. We would also like to express our thanks and deep appreciation to the Member States that supported the resolutions adopted today under the agenda items entitled "The situation in the Middle East" and "Question of Palestine".

I wish to stress the special importance we attach to the resolution just adopted by the General Assembly on Jerusalem, which is a core issue in the settlement of the Middle East question. I would like also to mention the resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The fact that only one State voted against the resolution on Jerusalem and only two against the resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine clearly expresses the international position, the nature of the change required in the parties' positions and the direction that change needs to take.

The voting today reiterates the international community's commitment to the conclusion of a just settlement of the Palestinian question and to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. These resolutions support the peace process and are anchored in the principle of the United Nations continuing responsibility for the question of Palestine until a settlement on that question is reached. They reaffirm the international community's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council. We believe that the international community has sent a clear and correct message and hope that all the parties concerned will understand the content of the message and work accordingly.

In conclusion, we would like to thank, in particular, the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts and their continued support for our people and our just cause.

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 33.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.73

General Assembly
Fifty-first Session

Official Records

73rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 5 December 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 34

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/540)

Mr. Hoey (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries — Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — align themselves with this statement. Iceland also aligns itself with this statement.

The agenda item we are addressing today, "Assistance in mine clearance", focuses our attention on the humanitarian dimension of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. The numbers of lives lost and bodies maimed are all the more devastating because these losses and injuries can and should be prevented. The costs in social, economic and environmental terms to countries and communities can be avoided.

Over the past year there has been a significant shift in the way these weapons are perceived by the international community, a shift that saw concrete expression in the widespread recognition at this year's session of the General Assembly of the need to conclude an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines as soon as possible. The European Union is committed to this goal and will work towards the achievement of an effective international agreement. We shall seek to raise without delay, in the most appropriate international forum, the issue of a total ban, to which we are committed.

Our attention is focused in this debate on the humanitarian and developmental consequences of the proliferation in the use of landmines. According to the Secretary-General's report, there are an estimated 110 million unexploded landmines in more than 70 countries. Approximately 2 million more are laid each year, while only 100,000 are cleared. Thus for every mine cleared, 20 more are laid. The scope of the problem is obvious. Peacekeeping, peace-building, rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict situations are rendered extremely difficult in these circumstances.

While acknowledging the intractable nature of the problem, we must also acknowledge our responsibilities and make every effort to assist mine-clearance activities. Significant human and financial resources are being devoted by the international community to assistance in mine clearance, which is, by its nature, a long-term task; to efficient and effective demining programmes where the primary emphasis is on the development of national mine-clearance capacities by afflicted countries; to mine-awareness programmes; and to the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of victims of landmines.

96-86992 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The primary responsibility for demining lies with the parties responsible for the laying of the mines. The extent to which the United Nations should be called upon to provide assistance in mine clearance must take into account the capacity of the parties involved to take on this obligation themselves. In this regard, the commitment to renounce the use of anti-personnel landmines is of particular importance.

The European Union welcomes the increased importance that the United Nations Secretariat is giving to mine clearance. We were encouraged by the consideration given to demining in the context of peacekeeping operations by the Security Council in August this year, and welcome the statement of the President of the Council, which — while recognizing the differing responsibilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations bodies in this area — underlined the need to coordinate efforts system-wide.

We wish to emphasize the operational and coordination roles of the United Nations in the field of demining. In this context, the European Union supports the central role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point in the United Nations system for coordination, humanitarian demining and related issues. It is central to the success of the efforts of the United Nations system that there be a clear delineation of responsibilities and sufficient coordination to ensure a coherent and integrated approach to mine-clearance activities as well as the full and effective use of resources and operational capacity. Coordination with non-governmental organizations, which are playing an increasingly important role in humanitarian mine clearance, is also essential.

The European Union gives strong support to mine-clearance activities, through direct involvement in programmes with afflicted countries and through assistance to multilateral initiatives, particularly those carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. In addition to the 6.6 million ECUs it has already contributed to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, the European Union, in September of this year, decided to earmark 7 million ECUs for demining activities up to the end 1997. Half of this amount will be contributed to the Trust Fund, and the Union is currently considering a number of proposals for support, in consultation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The member States of the Union also make significant national contributions to the Trust Fund, and support for mine-clearance activities feature strongly in their bilateral programmes with affected countries.

The European Union welcomes the recent international initiatives on landmines, which assisted in building consensus on, *inter alia*, how to deal more effectively with demining activities. The report of the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held in Copenhagen, contains important recommendations regarding the elaboration of international standards for humanitarian mine-clearance operations, and shows that the development and use of new and specialized equipment that will considerably enhance mine-clearance technology is not far off. We will continue to support vigorously all efforts to elaborate such international standards and to improve further demining technology.

The declaration entitled "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines", adopted at the International Strategy Conference, held in Ottawa in October 1996, also includes encouraging commitments by participants on the provision of greater resources for mine-clearance and mine-awareness activities and for victim assistance. We welcome the offer by the Government of Belgium to host a follow-on conference to be held in Brussels in June next year. The conference to be hosted by the Government of Japan next year, aimed at reinforcing international support for the work of the United Nations in landmine clearance, is a welcome means through which the international agenda can be moved forward in this area. We also welcome the initiative of the Government of Germany to host a meeting on mechanical mine clearance.

The European Union will again this year introduce a draft resolution under this agenda item on assistance in mine clearance, which we hope will receive broad support and be adopted by consensus. This would provide a clear indication of the international community's commitment to deal effectively with the problem of mine clearance. Furthermore, we, for our part, are strongly committed, in the first instance, to the elimination of anti-personnel landmines through a global ban, and, secondly, to supporting, to the greatest extent possible, efforts aimed at mitigating the effects of the use of these mines, at raising awareness and at the rehabilitation of victims.

Mr. Horin (Ukraine): For the fourth time, this body is discussing the problem of the mine crisis, which has struck not only individual countries but also whole regions. One might expect that, four years after this issue

was first raised in the General Assembly, our planet would be much less contaminated by these seeds of death. Unfortunately, the available figures prove just the opposite. Each year some 2 to 3 million mines are laid, while only 100,000 are cleared. If this tendency persists, in the very near future the world may face a probably irreversible humanitarian disaster of unpredictable consequences.

That is why, if we want to avoid, or at least minimize, the possibility of such a development, two interlinked and interdependent problems must be resolved.

First, we must outlaw the use of this type of weapon. My delegation is satisfied with the fact that the Geneva Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects succeeded in elaborating an amended Protocol II that struck a delicate balance between common humanitarian aspirations and the serious concerns of many countries over the possibility of diminishing their defence capabilities owing to the imposition of new restrictions. However, the amended Protocol II appears to be quite far from meeting the expectations of the majority of States and the hopes of millions of people throughout the world. Nevertheless, an extremely important step has been undertaken to eliminate the threat which landmines pose to the civilian population.

In this context, we welcome the initiative of a number of States to elaborate and conclude a relevant legally binding international agreement. We see the comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines as the final goal of efforts aimed at overcoming the consequences of large-scale and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines in many countries and regions. Ukraine will not object to the inclusion of an item on elaboration of a global anti-personnel landmine treaty in the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Secondly, it is necessary to mobilize joint efforts to create effective organizational schemes and cost-effective technical means for mine clearance. Landmines are a major impediment to the efforts of nations weakened by conflict to rebuild their societies. Landmines prevent agricultural land from being worked, roads from being used, people from returning to their homes, confidence from being restored. It is shocking to realize that more women, children and agricultural workers are killed, wounded and maimed after ceasefires than during actual conflicts. Activities in this field are an important humanitarian undertaking which will reduce unnecessary casualties and, at the same time, enable the fragile societies that emerge from conflicts to rebuild and rehabilitate their civil societies.

The delegation of Ukraine believes that only full-scale international efforts, on both multilateral and bilateral levels, engaging all Member States as well as non-governmental organizations, can bring us closer to a real breakthrough in our endeavour. In this context, we express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the activities of the United Nations in the field of assistance in mine clearance (A/51/540).

We recognize that the United Nations is destined to play a central coordinating role in organizing the activities of all major actors, and recent experience has proven that this role is very effective. In our opinion, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has become a real — and not only a formal — focal point for all humanitarian mine-clearance activities. The Department coordinates humanitarian mine-clearance activities by establishing policy guidelines for post-conflict mine-clearance activities, providing managerial oversight to designated national programmes, encouraging and facilitating the development of new technology to mobilize resources for mine-clearance activities, and coordinating advocacy efforts on the mine issue.

We commend, specifically, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which are very instrumental in practical efforts to realize such programmes, which include surveying, clearance, mine awareness and training.

At a time when the United Nations is under strong criticism for its inability to reform its activities promptly, our delegation ventures to consider that the establishment of a United Nations mine-clearance potential is exemplary proof of its capacity to revitalize itself.

At the same time, no one can question the role of Member States in acting decisively in this field. That is why Ukraine attaches great importance to promoting international cooperation in mine clearance. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that our country is prepared to provide, on specific terms, special units of its military forces for demining operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, or on a bilateral basis.

A mine-clearance training centre, established in the city of Kamyanets-Podilsky, provides all the facilities necessary to train foreign specialists in this field. We consider "train the trainer" programmes to be the most successful way to tackle large-scale demining operations. In our view, such training in Ukraine will be especially useful to prepare instructors from countries now facing the task of clearing mines produced in the former Soviet Union.

Our delegation notes with satisfaction that the problem of mine clearance has become an issue on the Security Council's agenda. The fruitful discussion that took place in the Security Council on the problem of demining in the context of United Nations peacekeeping has shed light on many acutely important issues. Among them is the necessity of closer cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In our opinion, it is worthwhile to follow the practice of dispatching joint missions of the two departments to areas of conflict more often. They could be asked to assess the scope of the landmine problem in each country and then develop the most effective programmes of assistance in mine clearance for the territory concerned.

It is also very important to address the problem of improving existing demining techniques. At a time when in some regions of the world the huge number of mines silently awaiting their prey exceeds the number of inhabitants, the mobilization of the scientific and material resources needed to create state-of-the-art demining technologies and instruments is evidently an extremely urgent problem. In this respect, our delegation welcomes the results of the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held in Denmark from 2 to 4 July 1996. We share the opinion that the framework adopted for the elaboration of international standards and procedures for such operations will go a long way towards making future mine-clearance activities safer, more cost-effective and more professional.

In view of the extreme importance of the issue under discussion, the delegation of Ukraine proposes that the draft resolution before the Assembly be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Iragorri (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a particular honour for me to address this body on behalf of the Republic of Colombia because of the importance my country attaches to the item we are discussing today.

Once again, we are taking the time to consider the subject of assistance for landmine clearance, that is, the response of the international community to one of the most dramatic problems of our times, affecting the population of more than 70 countries. As the Secretary-General movingly said in a report to the General Assembly (A/50/701) last year, anti-personnel landmines are, indeed, weapons of mass destruction in slow motion.

It can be said that the greatest achievement of the last few years in this area has been the start of an effort to sensitize the international community to the gravity and magnitude of the problem of landmine proliferation. During this past year, numerous activities have taken place with a view to solving the problems caused by anti-personnel landmines.

In this regard, one of the highlights was the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as the amendments to its Protocol II.

Also deserving of special attention are the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, which took place last July under the auspices of the Government of Denmark, and the Ottawa Conference, at which a declaration was adopted establishing a commitment to the earliest possible conclusion of an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines and recognition of the fact that the international community must provide greater resources for mine-clearance operations.

My delegation commends the fact that several activities on the question have been programmed for next year, among them a conference for the follow-up to Ottawa, which will be held at Brussels in June 1997, and the conference on anti-personnel landmines to be held in March 1997 under the auspices of the Government of Japan. Those events will undoubtedly contribute to finding solutions that will be beneficial to the community of nations.

Although statistics vary, the report of the Secretary General for the current year estimates that there are 110 million landmines buried in more than 70 countries. The majority of such mines pose a threat to the life and integrity of populations of developing countries that are, or have been, the scenes of international or domestic conflicts. Those developing countries are making great

efforts to reconstruct their economies and to accommodate the return of populations displaced as a result of those conflicts.

Landmines kill and maim children gathering wood and farmers tending their fields. Landmines do not pay heed to peace treaties or ceasefires. They are perpetually waging war, against everything and everyone.

It is estimated that 25,000 mine-related casualties occur each year worldwide. Most of those victims are civilians. Each year, more landmines are laid, and mine-clearance activities cover only a fraction of them. The human and material costs are enormous. Manufacturing a landmine may cost less than $5, while its removal can cost between $100 and $1,000.

In his report, the Secretary-General draws our attention to the seriousness of the problem, noting that:

> "Assuming no new mines were laid, removing all mines currently in the ground could cost anywhere between $50 billion and $100 billion (at current prices)." (*A/51/540, para. 108*)

In addition, according to 1995 statistics, in that year approximately 100,000 landmines were deactivated, but between 2 and 5 million were laid. The current rates of funding for landmine clearance indicate that it could take more than 10 centuries to remove the mines that have already been laid. This does not take into account the fact that there are between 100 and 150 million landmines in stockpiles.

It is only fitting here to commend the role the United Nations has played in landmine clearance. Nevertheless, its programmes operate in only 9 of the 70 countries most affected. Bearing in mind that the objective of those programmes is to develop within each country a national mechanism to manage and execute an integrated programme of mine clearance and that, as a consequence of armed conflicts, the affected countries are facing considerable economic constraints, only the effective contribution of the international community can enable us gradually to overcome the serious problems caused by existing landmines.

It is evident that mine clearance alone, even at a rate that is three, five or even 10 times faster than the projects currently under way, will not solve the problem. It is impossible to solve the problems posed by landmines unless the proliferation of such weapons is halted. Therefore, any initiative is welcome, including unilateral moratoriums. However, the only real solution is a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, including their production, stockpiling, transfer and use.

In order to face the problems caused by landmines, it is necessary that action be taken in both the disarmament and humanitarian fields. An integral solution is required. In this connection, my country, convinced of the need and importance of such action, is a sponsor, along with a large number of States Members of the Organization, of the draft resolution that was adopted in the First Committee. That draft resolution supports the completion, as soon as possible, of negotiations on an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We are also a sponsor of the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance that is to be considered by the General Assembly.

We remain committed to promoting actions in favour of continuing the process of assistance for mine-clearance activities. We have a historical commitment to our peoples to contribute collectively to putting an end to this indiscriminate method of sowing death.

We have witnessed with frustration and been victimized by the continuing existence of this threat. Thus, our peoples must wage a final battle to eliminate this cruel and threatening weapon from the face of the Earth. The cost to humanity created by the existence of landmines has been too high, and their elimination would be an everlasting legacy for future generations.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): I should first of all like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative report on assistance in mine clearance.

The Norwegian Government is deeply concerned by the increasing use of anti-personnel landmines in conflict areas. The primary victims of such mines are unarmed civilians, and particularly children. But landmines also have a devastating effect on societies at large by making entire areas of land inaccessible for decades and preventing refugees and internally displaced persons from returning home, thereby hindering social and economical development.

The only response to the scourge of anti-personnel mines is their total prohibition and total elimination. Norway has consistently advocated a total ban on the production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines. In

June 1995, we declared a moratorium on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines.

I am proud to announce that as of 1 October this year, all anti-personnel mines found in Norwegian military stockpiles have been removed and destroyed. In carrying out this extensive out-phasing and destruction programme, Norway has become a country free from anti-personnel mines. We hope that our example will add weight to the ongoing international efforts to ban those weapons. In addition, Norway is currently drawing up regulations prohibiting the export and import of anti-personnel mines and their components.

International action is now more important and more urgent than ever. One means of action is to increase international demining capacity, primarily by enhancing permanent local demining capabilities. With this in mind, Norway in 1996 spent in excess of $14 million on humanitarian mine-related activities — including most notably, mine clearance, training of local personnel and mine awareness — in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, northern Iraq and Croatia. These funds have been channelled mainly through the United Nations and the Norwegian People's Aid, a non-governmental organization. I can announce here today that we will maintain or increase our support for activities of this kind in the years to come.

Furthermore, Norway is ready to contribute expert personnel to the stand-by capacity of the United Nations mine-assistance programmes through the Norwegian Emergency Preparedness System. We are also ready to help exploratory missions and to provide personnel and resources to start up United Nations mine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes.

It is a fact that more resources are set aside for the production of new weapons than for the alleviation of damages caused by the same weapons. Sadly, this also applies to mines. For this reason, we must concentrate on developing improved demining technology.

The Norwegian People's Aid, funded by the Norwegian Government, has recently used a mechanical demining vehicle — invented by the Norwegian company Tonstad and developed by Sweden's Bofors — in its demining programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The machine is expected significantly to speed up the clearing of open fields.

This is but one example of what can be done. But even more basically, since the suspected or presumed existence of mines in a given area may prevent the application of local mine-clearing technologies, more efforts need to be made towards developing mine-detection technologies. Effective mine-detection technology may be helpful in finding out, in a comparatively short time, if mines exist in a given area, and also can indicate how best to go about the exacting task of mine clearance, notably in helping local efforts and technologies.

In this respect, Norway wishes to thank the Danish Government and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for holding the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology earlier this year.

The outcome of the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, held earlier this year, fell far short of our expectations. The amended Protocol II on landmines does not ban anti-personnel mines and does not go as far as we and many others would have wished in the area of interim protection for civilians. This is disappointing, but it should not prevent us from welcoming the amended Protocol as an important first step on the road to a legally binding global ban. We believe that the annual meetings of States parties and the next Review Conference in 2001 will serve as important forums for promoting a strong political momentum for a global ban.

It is encouraging indeed that more than 30 countries involved in the Ottawa process are now advocating a total ban on anti-personnel mines. In our view, a concerted effort by these countries will be the most effective way of continuing the fight against these weapons.

It is our hope, therefore, that the number of States that share the goals of this process will continue to grow, so that the curse that landmines inflict on innocent people throughout the world can be curbed.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine clearance highlights the manner in which conflicts have transformed themselves and how the United Nations has dealt with the myriad of problems they pose. As the report makes clear, the magnitude and cost of these activities are beyond the reach of the countries afflicted by landmines. My delegation therefore welcomes the renewed consideration of this issue, which, hopefully, will lead to a better grasp of the issues at stake and enhance our knowledge on how

Member States can respond to the imperative need for demining.

The gravity of the problems attendant upon mining and related devices have long been self-evident. They affect all facets of national life in developing countries, where life cannot return to normal because of these deadly devices. The loss of life and the destitution that the civilian population has suffered during years of debilitating conflicts is perpetuated through the continued risks they face as they return to their daily lives and rebuild their communities. Consequently, this subject has emerged as a global problem of enormous proportions.

The Organization's basic approach to assistance in mine clearance has been based on the principle of national capacity-building that is sustainable once its agencies have withdrawn from the countries concerned. Time is needed to build such capacities for demining, and teams often have to take a case-by-case approach to the various countries in which they operate, since geography and mine types vary. The political will of the local authorities to cooperate with demining programmes can either seriously hinder or help in eliminating mines. Training locals to establish sustainable demining capacities is the only way to reduce the long-term effects of mines.

The issue of mine clearance is indeed complex and has technical, financial, political and administrative facets. Rightly, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been the focal point for demining. An integrated approach has permitted numerous agencies to coordinate their activities through the central office of the Department in order to operate effectively in the field. Other United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as a number of non-governmental organizations, are playing fundamental roles in rendering assistance in mine clearance, which Indonesia fully supports.

In the past year, the United Nations has been engaged in the implementation of demining in nine countries. The mine-clearance operations in Cambodia and Afghanistan are among the most effective. Since the setting-up process and training for mine clearance can be lengthy, it is not surprising that the best results have been registered in the longest standing programmes. The demining school set up in Angola has become the core of the demining programme. In other areas, however, mine-clearance efforts have not been effective.

Research in mine technology remains an area in which intensified efforts need to be made. The technology currently being used for mine detection and clearance is outdated. Member States that are in a position to do so can contribute properly trained and experienced instructors, the trained manpower needed to carry out demining and the training of the local populations, and appropriate and modern equipment to locate and destroy landmines. We fully support all efforts in this context.

The disastrous effects of landmines can be curbed through technical and financial assistance to demining activities and programmes. For this to materialize, international consensus and concerted political will among the Member States is imperative to deal with the problem at the source.

My delegation has noted the decision of several States to impose moratoriums on or ban the production, export and operational use of these weapons. Notwithstanding the efforts already under way to eliminate these deadly weapons, the ultimate goal remains a global ban. We therefore agree with the widely held view that such a ban is the only way to ensure the attainment of these goals and thus end the indiscriminate killing and maiming of innocent civilians.

Finally, my delegation hopes that Member States will extend their cooperation to the Secretary-General by providing relevant information on the steps taken to realize the objectives contained in the draft resolution, and we look forward to participating in all future endeavours to resolve the problems posed by landmines.

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): My delegation is pleased to speak on the question of assistance in mine clearance.

The problem of landmines remains one of the most critical areas to which our Organization must pay special attention in order to minimize the loss of life. We say this conscious of the fact that the definitive answer lies, first and foremost, in the responsibility of each State to stop the production of landmines, thus preventing their use.

It is regrettable to note that more than 100 million mines are scattered throughout the world, mainly in

villages, silently waiting for their next innocent victims. More alarming is the fact that as mines are being removed one by one from the soil of some countries, new ones are being planted elsewhere, with no regard for the women and children who will invariably encounter them by accident. In my own country, the landmines that were planted during consecutive conflicts continue today to take the lives of innocent people, particularly children and women.

We are therefore pleased and encouraged to note the relevant role that the United Nations system and the international community have been playing in outlining the course of action to take in tackling the problem of landmines in many developing countries, including Mozambique. Two initiatives deserve our full support, namely the development of a sustainable national mine-clearance capacity, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 50/82, with a view to ensuring continuity of mine clearance at the national level, and the call for a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines. That is why we decided to support the draft resolution on this issue submitted at this session of the General Assembly. We also support the Security Council initiative to look at mine clearance in the context of peacekeeping operations.

On behalf of my Government, let me seize this opportunity to reiterate once again our appreciation for the remarkable work done by the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and our development partners in assisting the Government to address vital issues pertaining to the mine-clearance programme in Mozambique. This comprehensive programme includes the clearance of priority roads, the development of mine-clearance capacity and the implementation of a mine-awareness programme. The success of this programme is crucial to the efforts currently under way to rehabilitate the infrastructure in the countryside and to promote agricultural production in the rural areas.

It was in this context that my Government established in May 1995 a National Mine Clearance Commission, with responsibility for the development of all national demining policies and programmes. Furthermore, UNDP is currently assisting the National Mine Clearance Commission to develop a national mine-clearance plan that lays out mine-clearance priorities and represents a significant step forward in the development of a national demining capacity. It is expected that by the end of February 1997, national non-governmental organizations will take over the full operation of the demining process in the country.

To date, all organizations involved in mine clearance in Mozambique are collectively clearing approximately 1,000 mines and 1,000 items of unexploded ordnance per month. These records indicate that more than 20,000 mines have been cleared. Questions are often asked as to how many mines are left and how long it will take to clear them all. These are difficult to answer with any real accuracy. We are certain, however, that however many landmines there are, they must all be removed, be they 2 million, 1 million or less. The problem therefore remains great and represents a real challenge to our development efforts. One landmine or one million landmines, or even the mere threat of the existence of a landmine will cause a serious problem in a developing country such as Mozambique by slowing down the socio-economic development and preventing the local people from going about their normal lives without fear of injury or death. The continued assistance of the Assembly in the endeavours to rid the earth of this menace will be highly appreciated.

Mr. Rider (New Zealand): The scale of the problem caused by landmines is well documented, including in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/540). More than 110 million landmines have been laid in more than 60 countries. Only some 100,000 are removed annually, while at the same time millions of new ones are still being laid. The toll, in terms of death and injury, is horrendous, and all the more so since most victims are innocent civilians, many of them children.

Landmines also pose a significant threat to peacekeeping personnel. As casualties in Bosnia and Angola have sadly demonstrated, the presence of landmines is a major inhibition to the ability of the United Nations to carry out its duties in support of peacekeeping missions.

These challenges to the international community cannot go unanswered.

New Zealand calls again for an immediate and unequivocal ban on all anti-personnel landmines. The outcome of the recent Review Conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was disappointing because it did not go as far as we had hoped. Nevertheless it was a success in terms of keeping the landmines problem at the forefront of international attention. The next Review Conference will be in 2001. In the meantime, we must take every opportunity to enhance the momentum in favour of a global ban.

In April this year the New Zealand Government renounced the operational use of anti-personnel landmines by the New Zealand Defence Force. So many others have taken similar steps that it is our belief that the tide of international opinion has turned against the use of anti-personnel landmines. This was the message delivered at the Ottawa Conference in October, where a commitment was made by a large number of countries towards the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban such mines. We look forward to the follow-on conference in Brussels next year.

Those of us who attended the Ottawa meeting recognized the need to provide significantly greater resources to mine-awareness programmes, mine-clearance operations and victim assistance. We salute those who have taken a lead. In addition to Canada, I want to refer to Japan, Denmark and the United States. Germany is hosting a meeting on mine-clearance technology only next week. We welcome all these initiatives as signs that the international community is determined to address head-on the landmine threat.

New Zealand itself is proud to have been actively engaged in, and to have made a significant contribution to, international mine-clearance efforts over many years. We have contributed demining instructors and programme management personnel from the New Zealand Defence Force to United Nations operations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola. Our personnel continue to serve in this capacity in the latter three of those places.

We have also offered financial support for United Nations efforts in demining. In July 1995, the New Zealand Government announced at the International Meeting on Mine Clearance a pledge of $NZ 100,000 per year for the next three years to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. That annual instalment has now been increased to $NZ 250,000. In addition, New Zealand continues to provide substantial funding to the Cambodian Mine Action Centre and to the unexploded ordnance programme in Laos.

New Zealand has also provided financial support for the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and two New Zealand Defence Force officers are currently attached to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, respectively, as demining advisers.

New Zealand has welcomed the Secretary-General's moves to improve the ability of the United Nations to manage and conduct landmine-related operations: first, the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund, which provides a necessary and timely mechanism to channel funding to demining operations; secondly, the establishment of specialized demining units within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs; and thirdly, the designation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point in the United Nations for mine-clearance activities.

These were welcome steps, but much remains to be done to ensure a more seamless approach to the conduct of the various mine-related tasks through the life of a mission and beyond. It was therefore timely that the Security Council took action in August to follow up efforts undertaken in the General Assembly to focus international attention on landmines.

New Zealand supports the Council statement of 30 August. We too recognize the need for the mandates given by the Security Council to include strategic recognition and direction on mine issues such as operational and humanitarian mine clearance, mine awareness, database information-gathering and the establishment, through training programmes, of indigenous demining capabilities.

We agree that this would better enable the Secretary-General and mission planners to allocate appropriate resources towards achieving the objectives set, and thus to ensure a smooth transition from demining as a peacekeeping requirement to demining as a long-term peace-building activity.

There is a role for the Council in more clearly defining the responsibilities for the various mine-clearance tasks among the agencies involved in a peacekeeping operation. We believe that there is a need to rationalize in order to avoid duplication. This was recognized this year by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which called upon the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to provide a more coordinated approach between the demining units of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We understand that these efforts are bearing fruit and that changes are being made to ensure that responsibilities for the coordination of mine clearance and

its execution are clearer. In this regard, New Zealand strongly endorses the decision of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to conduct a survey to determine lessons learned from mine-clearance programmes to date. Such surveys have proved invaluable in the broader peacekeeping area. We are confident that this one will prove its worth as well in helping create uniform operating procedures and standards that will benefit both training and the conduct of operations.

Drawing also from the broader peacekeeping agenda, New Zealand would see merit in examining, within the standby force concepts currently under investigation, the possibility of a rapid mine-clearance capability that could be employed before or at the beginning of an operation. It is apparent, moreover, that operations in areas with a significant mine threat require special consideration, and thought should be given to acquiring greater numbers of mine-protected vehicles and developing operational concepts and standardized procedures to counter the mine threat. Such improvements in operational demining practices will have direct spin-offs in the humanitarian area.

These are some of the substantive issues requiring urgent action within the United Nations system if the United Nations is effectively to discharge its responsibilities in mine clearance in both the peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building settings. New Zealand looks forward to co-sponsoring the draft resolution to be introduced shortly under this item, and which sets out those responsibilities, and our determination to meet them, in some detail.

Mr. Karsgaard (Canada): We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on assistance in mine clearance. The report makes clear why landmines have been described as a humanitarian disaster and as the war that never ends. Anti-personnel mines, in particular, pose a great and continuing danger to millions of innocent men, women and children, often decades after the armed conflict in their country has been resolved. Landmines prevent refugees from returning to their homes, and once they have returned, prevent them from using their agricultural land to support themselves and rebuild their lives. Landmines place an enormous burden on health and social welfare systems and destroy vital infrastructure, too often in countries which can least afford such costs.

Given the urgency of the problem, we welcome the Secretary-General's description of the progress made in mine clearance in the past year. The leadership exerted by the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), despite its limited resources, is welcome. We look forward to continued, strengthened leadership from DHA. We welcome as well the draft resolution that will be submitted, including in particular its important message that all Member States have a role to play in addressing the horror of landmines. Canada agrees completely with the emphasis both in the draft resolution and in the Secretary-General's report on building national capacity for mine clearance within the countries affected. Since 1993 Canada has contributed Can$ 8.5 million in grants for demining, most of which was provided to the United Nations in support of its programmes in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Laos.

Those funds were often used to complement the technical assistance provided by Canadian demining experts. Canadian forces personnel played a key role in establishing the Cambodian Mine Action Centre. We are proud that the United Nations chose a retired Canadian officer to head its Mine Action Centre in Bosnia. Active and retired members of the Canadian forces have also provided training in mine awareness and mine clearance in Afghanistan, Angola and Mozambique.

In addition, Canada has given financial and technical assistance to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations organizations for their mine action programmes and has provided financial support for the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

While United Nations assistance remains extremely important, the primary responsibility for mine clearance within their borders still rests with Member States. The importance of a strong commitment by the host Government to mine-clearance activities in its territory cannot be overestimated. At the same time, Member States and, indeed, subnational groups have a clear responsibility for removing mines they have had a role in laying.

We welcome the Secretary-General's reference to mine clearance as a development issue as well as a humanitarian priority. We have been pressing the Bretton Woods institutions and regional development banks to consider investing in mine clearance as part of their development strategy for affected countries.

We welcome the World Bank's decision to undertake mine-clearance projects in Bosnia and are

supporting that effort financially. We hope the World Bank's example will be emulated by the regional development banks.

We wish to encourage the participation of the international development institutions, but at the same time we recognize that the involvement of more players in mine action programmes increases the need for a coordinated approach. We have in the past called on the Secretary-General to ensure close cooperation among United Nations agencies with mine action programmes. Such cooperation should also extend beyond United Nations agencies to include other members of the United Nations family and, perhaps less formally, other international governmental organizations. We are encouraging the World Bank to work closely with DHA's Mine Action Centre in Bosnia, in recognition of the important overall coordinating role DHA can and should play.

The Secretary-General's report states that approximately 100,000 anti-personnel landmines are cleared each year. That is a mere fraction of the number of mines that are laid. In other words, we are losing ground at a dramatic rate. Canada is committed to the ultimate elimination of anti-personnel landmines as the only means of controlling this scourge. In October we were greatly encouraged that 50 States adopted the Declaration of the Ottawa Conference, in which they committed themselves to ensuring, among other things, the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines.

We further welcomed the adoption by the First Committee of draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.46, calling for a global ban on landmines, with positive votes from 141 Member States and no dissenting vote. We look forward to its adoption in plenary meeting. That First Committee draft resolution, together with the Ottawa Declaration, suggest a developing momentum on which we can all build.

In addition to its concluding Declaration, the Ottawa Conference adopted an Agenda for Action to address other aspects of the landmine problem. Different portions of that Agenda are now being implemented by various Governments and organizations.

Notable upcoming activities are the conferences to be hosted by Germany, Japan and Belgium, in which Canada will be a full participant. The first two conferences will study the latest developments in demining technologies, and the Tokyo conference will also look at greater assistance to United Nations mine-clearance activities and to victims of landmines. The Belgian conference will take forward the process initiated in Ottawa.

The Canadian Government considers advances in demining technology, as well as support for landmine survivors, to be integral aspects of the landmines issue. We welcome the Japanese Government's decision to focus part of its conference on the needs of landmine victims, or as we prefer to say, survivors. Many of those survivors have the potential once again to be productive members of their societies. But they need our help, and there is much which can be done to make a huge difference in their lives. Such action need not necessarily require vast resources. While the International Committee of the Red Cross and some non-governmental organizations have been active in this area, this aspect of the landmine problem is only beginning to receive the attention it deserves from Member States. We are pleased to note that the Secretary-General's report makes reference to the situation of landmine survivors in each of its country programme reviews. We encourage DHA to act as a catalyst within the United Nations system, ensuring that vigorous action is taken to address the needs of landmine survivors.

As a follow-up to the Ottawa Conference, and to complement those being held in Germany, Japan and Belgium, the Canadian Government will be hosting a domestic forum next month. Our objective is to bring Canadians together to see how we can enhance Canada's capabilities in mine-detection and mine-clearance technology and in assisting landmine survivors.

Canada will continue to urge the international community to develop more effective and affordable humanitarian mine-clearance technologies and to recognize the needs of the landmine survivors.

My delegation is pleased to add Canada's name to the list of sponsors of the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance that will be submitted to the General Assembly.

Mr. Owada (Japan): Over the past few years, world opinion on the issue of landmines has undergone a drastic change. Since it was first taken up and discussed seriously by this body in 1993, international efforts to eliminate landmines have gained increasing momentum as a result of a series of successful international gatherings, such as the International Meeting on Mine Clearance at Geneva in the summer of 1995, the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology at

Copenhagen in July 1996, which was sponsored by the Government of Denmark and, most recently, the Ottawa Conference, which was held at the initiative of the Government of Canada as part of the international effort to achieve a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. During the same period, strenuous efforts have also been made to clear mines in many parts of the world as the United Nations and other humanitarian and non-governmental organizations have engaged in mine-clearance activities in such places as Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia and Mozambique.

It is gratifying to see that in this way the international community has taken an important first step towards the goal of eventually eliminating all anti-personnel landmines. I should like to take this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General and other members of the Secretariat of the United Nations, in particular the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as to the countries that have hosted the international meetings I have mentioned, for the initiative they have shown and for the efforts they have made towards achieving progress in this area. Thanks to their dedicated efforts, events have now taken an encouraging turn. Credit should also go to other international agencies and non-governmental organizations operating in the humanitarian fields and to demining experts and deminers engaged on a daily basis in activities on the ground, often under extremely difficult and even life-threatening conditions.

Despite those efforts, however, uncleared landmines remain in the ground in some 70 countries around the world, and they now total 110 million, according to the estimate of the United Nations. In those countries, they are a serious source of hazard to the lives of innocent children playing on the ground and diligent farmers working in the field. Such mines not only cause death and injury to thousands of innocent civilians every year, they also pose a major obstacle to the efforts for national reconstruction and rehabilitation in the post-conflict period.

What is more threatening is the fact that the number of these uncleared mines has been steadily increasing, owing to the laying of new landmines in numbers far greater than those cleared through the efforts of the United Nations and other organizations. Even if we assume that no new mines were to be laid, merely to remove all the mines already laid could cost anywhere between $50 billion and $100 billion, at the current price. That, in itself, is a staggering figure. In addition, clearing them would alone take many decades at the present pace of clearing 100,000 landmines per year. Those figures vividly illustrate how urgent it is that the international community redouble its efforts in this area and make a gigantic leap forward towards the goal of eventually getting rid of all anti-personnel landmines.

As Japan has repeatedly stressed on previous occasions, we need to pursue parallel approaches if we are serious about attaining our goal. On the one hand, we must tackle the root causes of the problem through the promotion of international efforts toward a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. On the other hand, we must also address the problem of humanitarian assistance relating to landmines through such international efforts as a further promotion of mine-clearance activities and the extension of assistance to landmine victims in a coordinated manner.

On the first of these two fronts of our efforts, considerable headway has been made in recent months. The agreement was reached last May at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Following that agreement, the Ottawa Conference was held — with considerable success — with a view to promoting international efforts in this direction. The First Committee of the General Assembly this year has adopted a draft resolution urging States to pursue rigorously an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines and to complete the negotiations as soon as possible. For its part, Japan will continue to support such international efforts to realize a global ban, as Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto pledged last June at the G-7 Summit Meeting at Lyon.

On the humanitarian side of the problem, Japan believes that reinforced international efforts should focus in particular on the following three areas: first, cooperation, principally through the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, in landmine clearance; secondly, cooperation in the development of new technology for landmine detection and removal; and, lastly, cooperation for assistance to landmine victims.

As part of its efforts to contribute to international cooperation in these humanitarian activities, Japan intends to organize a Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines in March next year. Compared with the Ottawa Conference, where the focus of attention was on the issue of the proliferation of landmines, the Tokyo

Conference will deal with the humanitarian aspects of the problem, and particularly on the three areas of international cooperation that I have just mentioned. I wish to take this opportunity to offer a brief description of what we in Japan intend to achieve at the Tokyo Conference.

In the area of mine-clearance activities, which is the first area I have mentioned, international support for the work of the United Nations on this score has grown dramatically since the establishment of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance in November 1994 and the International Meeting on Mine Clearance at Geneva in the summer of 1995. Nevertheless, the number of uncleared landmines around the world, as I mentioned at the outset, has been steadily increasing as a result of new attempts to lay mines, outpacing the efforts to clear existing mines, which now number 110 million. Consequently, there is a pressing need further to reinforce our efforts with regard to mine-clearance activities. While each donor country must continue to increase its financial and other assistance, it is imperative that the countries infested with landmines, in response to such international assistance, make mine-clearance activities an integral part of their national rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, in particular by developing their own mine-clearance capabilities. Through the concerted efforts of the mine-infested countries and the international community, we should establish a framework of partnership for mine clearance so that international assistance can be utilized in a more effective and coherent way. We hope that the discussions at the Tokyo Conference will lead to the establishment of guidelines for such a partnership.

With regard to the second theme of the Tokyo Conference, namely, the development of new mine-detection and removal technologies, it is clear that in order to cope with the present dire situation, efforts to engender international support are needed on an urgent basis in order to make progress in developing new technologies that will enable us to engage in detection and clearance in an efficient, economical and safe manner. Unless we succeed in developing such innovative technologies, our activities in mine clearance will run the risk of being overwhelmed by the attempts to lay new mines, which will outpace our efforts to clear them.

At the series of meetings held in recent months, including the Copenhagen Conference last June, discussion centred on the technological aspects of this issue. We expect that the discussions at the Tokyo Conference, on the other hand, will deal more with the policy aspects of the issue by focusing mainly on how we in the international community as a whole, while taking stock of the valuable results of the meeting, can promote such research and development efforts and how best we can utilize the results of such technological innovation for our humanitarian activities.

The last — but not the least — important issue that we expect to be discussed at Tokyo is the issue of assistance to landmine victims, or those the Canadian representative has just described as "landmine survivors". This is an issue that has not been squarely dealt with by itself at any of the previous meetings on landmines. In view of the estimated 25,000 mine-related casualties that occur every year, which may often include innocent women and children, the problem of assistance to those victims for medical treatment and rehabilitation is a task of great urgency that the international community must address. It is our hope that the Tokyo Conference will be able to tackle this issue, first, with a view to establishing a new framework of cooperation for international assistance to these landmine victims, and, secondly, with a view to affording an opportunity to draw the attention of the international community with a renewed appeal to respond to the desperate need for such assistance.

It is gratifying to see the issue of landmines attracting much greater international attention today. Together with that new interest, expectations are growing that the ongoing efforts to address the problem will produce tangible results. It is important that we take advantage of this favourable tide in the international environment and act vigorously to address this vitally important problem. The Government of Japan is ready to intensify its efforts to that end, in cooperation with other countries working in this direction. The initiative for the Tokyo Conference is one such modest attempt. It is my sincere hope that with the cooperation of like-minded countries and the United Nations Secretariat, that Conference will produce tangible results, thereby contributing to our common goal of eventually creating a world free from all anti-personnel landmines. Such devices are a scourge from which, in the name of humanity, we must rid ourselves. To this end, we in the international community must renew our commitment, so that the world will be a safer place for our children and our children's children.

Mr. Robinson (United States of America): The United Nations is all too familiar with the numbers associated with the global anti-personnel landmine crisis — an estimated 110 million landmines scattered around the world and 25,000 people, mostly civilians,

killed or maimed each year. Those hidden killers make it impossible for people to advance from wars and internal conflicts towards durable peace and security. Refugees and the internally displaced cannot return home, elections cannot be held in safety, agriculture and economic activity cannot resume and the crises brought on by wars or conflicts continue.

For those reasons, President Clinton, addressing the Assembly last September, called for the swift negotiation of a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The United States is committed to bringing this crisis to an end. It has already taken unilateral action, pending conclusion of a global ban. We have stopped the export of anti-personnel landmines and have led an effort to halt all trade in such inhumane instruments. As of today, more than 35 nations have joined us. We have increased research into new technologies for mine detection and clearance and have called upon the international community to support mine-clearance efforts. We have intensified our own mine-clearance programmes.

Earlier this week, at a conference on innovative techniques for landmine neutralization and removal at Washington, D.C., it was said that, at the current rate of mine clearance, it will require decades to remove the mines already planted in the ground. Yet we must not let the magnitude of the problem intimidate us. The United Nations Charter commits us:

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Since 1993, the United States Government has worked with non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and many countries with serious landmine problems. We have invested over $92 million on mine awareness and demining training programmes in 14 countries, establishing indigenous mine-clearance centres to build sustainable programmes and maximize available resources. We have invested an additional $13.5 million in research and development for mine-detection and demining technology. We will invest a further $47 million in humanitarian demining in 1997 alone. Of that figure, $14 million will be spent on research and development.

Let me turn for a moment to our newest demining programme, this one in Bosnia. To support full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, we are leading an international effort to begin the clearance of millions of landmines scattered throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Last June, President Clinton announced a new initiative of up to $15 million to develop an indigenous demining capacity to give the Bosnians the skills and equipment to locate and destroy the mines themselves.

The Mine Action Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina now operates under a United Nations mandate, coordinating all mine-awareness, data-gathering and mine-clearance activities through three regional offices, one in each ethnic region of the country. It will eventually become an entity of the Bosnian Government. The United States joined the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, the Implementation Force of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other nations to establish this sustainable demining programme.

A United States Special Forces Team recently completed the training of 175 Bosnian deminers representing all three ethnic communities and they, in turn, began demining operations in the field on 7 November. We hope that the international community will build on this first step through further contributions of funds, personnel and equipment so that the United Nations Protection Force Mine Action Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina can expand its mine-clearance activities throughout the country.

In addition to our country programmes and research efforts, the United States is establishing humanitarian demining centres that will serve as central clearing houses for available demining information and will provide a single-point access to the full spectrum of information, training, research and analysis in support of our global humanitarian demining programme.

For the last three years, the United States has introduced a General Assembly resolution calling for export moratoriums on anti-personnel landmines and their eventual elimination. This year, at the direction of President Clinton's arms control priorities, we introduced the draft resolution on a ban on anti-personnel landmines, calling on States

> "to pursue vigorously an effective, legally-binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible". (*A/C.1/51/L.46, para. 1*)

I am pleased to announce that the First Committee recently adopted this draft resolution by an overwhelming vote of 141 in favour, with 10 abstentions and not a single vote against. Clearly, the international community wants action now.

Indeed, there has been continuing international momentum focused on the worldwide landmine crisis, as evidenced in the recent conferences hosted by Denmark and Canada and those planned in Japan and Belgium for 1997.

Standing on this rostrum, President Clinton said that our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety. Mine-awareness training, especially for children, will be needed in many countries for quite some time. In this regard, we noted the recent United Nations announcement that in Kabul, the *Shura* ordered a stop to mine-awareness training for females in Afghanistan. This decision will clearly have major consequences for the security of women and children and should be immediately rescinded.

Focusing on children, let me also take this opportunity to say that we take pride in a joint effort by the United States entertainment industry — Warner Brothers and DC Comics — which joined with the United States Department of Defense and the United Nations to produce a Superman comic book in three languages as a new mine-awareness and education tool for the children of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We are pleased to be an original sponsor of the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance which is before us today. This draft resolution complements our own initiatives and those of others and demonstrates a growing awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the worldwide landmine scourge. We applaud the United Nations and nations around the world for their work. Let us continue to work together to help restore the health and welfare of war-ravaged communities and countries all over the world and to spare the next generation from this deadly legacy. Let everyone's children and grandchildren walk the Earth in peace and safety.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The importance which the United Nations attaches to the problem of landmines reveals the seriousness of this problem. Landmines threaten human beings' health and very existence and post a grave threat to land and peoples.

It is important to point out that the United Nations has taken steps to eliminate this problem. An international Conference on landmines was held a year ago. In order to focus international efforts along these lines, the Secretary-General established a voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. The current debate is an important contribution of the United Nations which affirms the interest of the international community in the problem of mines, from which many countries suffer.

In the report contained in document A/51/540, the Secretary-General has given an overall picture of United Nations activities in mine-clearance assistance. My delegation expresses its satisfaction at the efforts being made, including assistance to countries affected by this problem. However, we must point out that the report does not fully satisfy us, despite its broad scope, because it stresses mine-clearance activities in countries with internal conflicts. We have noted this gap in the past.

We feel that the report would be more realistic and more generalized if it drew attention to the situation of countries that have mines that were laid in the past and continue to claim victims. The report could point out honestly and openly this aspect of the problem of anti-personnel landmines, which militate against "An Agenda for Peace".

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya suffers from old mines. Our suffering began over 50 years ago during the Second World War. Since then, numerous mines have been laid on Libyan territory by belligerents. This has been revealed in numerous studies, which have estimated the presence of millions of mines. A United Nations study, contained in document A/38/383, points out that, in the course of various campaigns in North Africa, the Allied and Axis Powers laid millions of mines on our territory. The number is estimated to be between 5 and 19 million mines.

Regrettably, the Allied forces and the Axis forces departed leaving all these remnants behind without any maps or information showing their location, compounding the serious effect they have had on individuals and the economy. A study, published in document A/49/357/Add.1, states that the number of persons killed by landmines has reached 5,670 and that 4,935 persons have suffered permanent injury. These figures tally with figures contained in another document (A/38/383), which states that, in the three decades following the Second World War, explosive remnants have killed 4,000

Libyans and injured thousands more, and that most of those killed and injured were children.

The grave consequences of landmines have not been limited to human losses. The presence of these mines has impeded efforts to build roads and railways, implement anti-desertification plans and expand land reclamation, as confirmed by field studies. A report issued by the United Nations in 1983 states that approximately 27 per cent of Libya's arable land is covered with mines and that the development of the most important part of the country — the coastal strip — has been impeded by the presence of mines. Moreover, the existence of mines has prevented the exploitation of mineral resources, especially the development of certain deposits of iron and gypsum. Also, oil exploration activities have been affected because of the additional costs of removing war debris from oil fields and the roads leading to them. A study by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) said that approximately 27 per cent of agricultural land in Libya, land which is essentially limited, cannot be exploited because of mines.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has tried to address the problems of landmines by drafting several plans, including mine-awareness programmes and mine-clearance training. But the success of these plans has been limited. The conclusion we have drawn from our experience is that it is impossible to eliminate landmines with national resources alone. The mined lands are vast and Libyan technical expertise is limited. Furthermore, there is no information available on the types of mines planted or maps to indicate their location.

In its efforts to solve these problems, my country's delegation welcomes any assistance from the United Nations in the field of mine clearance. However, we would reiterate that any United Nations assistance in this field should not obscure the fact that the countries that have planted mines in the territories of other countries remain primarily responsible for their removal and the payment of compensation for the losses they have caused. This principle has been established in many international and regional forums, including this Assembly, which, in resolution 35/71, called on those States which planted mines to make available to the affected States all information on the areas in which such mines were placed, including maps indicating the position of those areas and information concerning the types of mines, and to assist the affected States in mine clearance.

The General Assembly has also supported the demand by the countries in whose territories the mines were planted that they be compensated by the countries that planted them for the losses they suffered. In resolution 36/188, the General Assembly reiterated its support for the demand of the States affected by the implantation of mines and the presence of other remnants of war on their lands for compensation for the losses incurred from the States responsible for those remnants. In resolutions 37/215, 38/162 and 39/167, the Assembly confirmed that responsibility for the clearance of remnants of war, including landmines, lies with the countries that planted them, and that these countries should provide the information and technical assistance needed to clear mines, and pay compensation for the losses caused by these mines, in addition to the costs of their removal and destruction.

We attach great importance to the implementation of the decisions of the international community on remnants of war. We in Libya do not deny that a number of the countries responsible for the planting of mines in our land have provided us with information. However, this information is insufficient. The landmines on Libyan territory cannot be eliminated with the help of the few maps given to us by the Italian and German Governments. That is why my country would renew its appeal to those two countries, and to others responsible for planting these mines, to indicate to us the types of mines, the length of the minefields and the manner in which the mines were planted, and to provide us with the advanced technology needed to detect and remove these mines. Libya had nothing to do with the circumstances that caused the outbreak of the Second World War and, as such, should not continue to suffer its consequences and tragedies.

The countries that fought that war and transplanted it to our land are responsible for the problems caused for our country for over five decades by these mines. These countries must bear the consequences of their actions. My country welcomes the desire recently expressed by the German Government and the Italian Government to cooperate with us in the detection and removal of mines. We look forward to the practical implementation of the declarations of the two Governments. We hope that their newly expressed attitude will be the beginning of the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions on remnants of war, and lead to assistance in eliminating those remnants and the payment of proper compensation for the losses caused. Any attempt at circumventing this will not exempt these countries from responsibility,

irrespective of the passage of time. They will even have to bear additional responsibilities which will remain valid as long as the "seeds of death" sown by their armies in our land are in place, exploding from time to time, injuring many innocent people among us.

At the start of this statement, we expressed our satisfaction at the efforts of the United Nations in the field of mine clearance. It is a good omen that international cooperation in this field coalesced at the World Conference on Assistance in Mine Clearance and was further strengthened in the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology held this July. The current discussion falls within this international interest in the crisis. My country's delegation values all these efforts. However, we are concerned at the fact that the international campaign has, so far, focused on dealing with problems resulting from current mines. This is not the right trend. What we need is for these efforts to include old mines, because mines are mines regardless of whether they were planted a long time ago or only recently. All of them jeopardize human life and destroy property. Like recent mines, old mines hamper the expansion of land reclamation and limit economic activity.

On the whole, the presence of mines, both old and new, constitutes a stumbling block for the achievement of development and a source of daily human tragedy and costly material losses. This is a real challenge that needs to be faced very seriously by the international community. Otherwise, the problem of landmines will never disappear and the frightening pictures will continue to haunt our imagination and the imagination of coming generations.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Recently, the international community has paid increasing attention to the range of problems relating to mine clearance that hamper the socio-economic recovery of conflict-affected countries and efforts to address pressing humanitarian problems in this context.

The dismal statistics on landmines are eloquent enough. According to current assessments, there are about 100 million mines planted in over 70 countries of the world. These devices continue to claim the lives of thousands of people — mainly peaceful citizens — even after a conflict has been more or less stabilized. In this regard, the most affected countries are Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. Landmines are also widely used in the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

For the Russian Federation, the problems posed by the threat and the clearance of mines are painful topics, since Russia is among the most affected States. More than 100,000 explosive devices are detected and destroyed on the territory of Russia every year, while expenses directly associated with such operations amount to more than $25 million a year. Despite the efforts made, thousands of our citizens have fallen victim to the Second World War "mine legacy" in times of peace.

A major task for the United Nations is to broaden its capabilities in overcoming the mine threat in zones of regional conflicts. Mine clearance is becoming an increasingly important and inalienable part of peacekeeping operations. When necessary, it should be, and is, included in the mandates of relevant United Nations missions; alternatively, a mechanism should be devised to ensure the use of the relevant capabilities of regional arrangements and non-governmental organizations in this respect.

Improved coordination between various United Nations agencies in the implementation of mine-clearance programmes, both in the course of United Nations peacekeeping operations and during post-conflict restoration, is becoming increasingly significant. It is in this light that we see close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs as desirable. We would recall that the Security Council, in its presidential statement of 30 August 1996, endorsed better coordination and a clear delineation of responsibilities between the two departments as well as with regard to other agencies of the United Nations system so as to avoid duplication of effort and to guarantee a coherent and integrated approach.

The problem of landmines is especially acute in the context of United Nations peacekeeping operations. United Nations forces are often deployed in areas where there is a persistent and serious mine threat, which challenges the Organization's capacity to carry out its peacekeeping functions effectively. In this connection, we would reaffirm that the main responsibility for landmine clearance in the context of the United Nations peacekeeping operation lies with the parties that have laid the mines.

Similarly, the mine threat will not allow humanitarian missions the necessary scale of operational activities, which is especially painful for such organizations and specialized agencies as the United

Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and others.

We hope that the Secretary-General's Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance will be given greater resources and the capacity to play a more active role in the financing of relevant programmes.

In general, all preconditions are already in place for the United Nations to play a leading role in rendering technical assistance and organizing national capacities for landmine clearance. We view this goal through the lens of effective cooperation between the United Nations, regional organizations and interested States.

It is also gratifying to note the United Nations development of standard procedures for mine-clearance operations. We deem it important that the United Nations database on landmines be a further updated and expanded with comprehensive statistical data on all aspects of mine-related problems.

In the Russian Federation, work on a special federal task programme for mine clearance, based on the relevant programmes of distinct regions, has entered its final phase. For us, issues relating to cooperation with the United Nations, the exchange of experience and technical assistance have a tangible, practical significance. It must be added that complex and expensive missions for clearing terrain and installations of mines are performed in the course of peacekeeping operations in the territories of the member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In the area of the Abkhaz conflict alone, CIS peacekeepers have disarmed over 21,000 explosive devices.

The exacerbation of the landmine situation in the Abkhaz conflict zone since early March has affected the safety and security conditions of the local population, refugees and displaced persons, as well as those of CIS peacekeepers and personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. Our suggestions regarding the problem are currently being discussed with the Secretariat.

Today, there has begun to emerge a legal foundation for international cooperation in mine clearance. An important step in this direction was the consensus adoption by Russia and the other participants in the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects in Geneva of an amended Protocol II on landmines.

The Russian Federation favours a gradual movement towards the goal of banning the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. At the basis of the amended Protocol on mines was a carefully developed balance of interests among all participants in the Conference that took into account the existing situation, the real capacities of countries and their security and defence interests.

We are firmly convinced that the main task now is to implement the Protocol, to strengthen its authority and to make it as universal as possible. This would enable us reliably and predictably to progress consistently and to develop step-by-step efforts towards a stricter set of limitations. Any attempt to achieve an explicit ban on mines or to discuss negotiations that have not yet begun only complicates this already complicated matter.

Russia, building on its experience and expertise, is ready to participate in rendering assistance in mine clearance to countries in need of such assistance on a multilateral or bilateral basis. We do so even though Russia itself needs financial support for its own mine-clearance programmes. A solid scientific, technological and industrial capability accumulated in developing detection and mine-clearing equipment allows us to participate in promising international programmes in the field. We are ready to place that capability at the service of international cooperation.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): "Of course, I am very scared, but what can we do? We have to farm to survive", said a Lao mother who was injured in the head by shrapnel from a bomblet.

"Nobody at school told me it could be dangerous", said an adolescent boy, sitting on a metal hospital bed, looking at the wounds to his shoulder and leg, badly burned by a phosphorous bomb.

"There are so many of them, just everywhere. It will be very hard to say one day that Laos is cleared, but we want to reduce the risks", said a United Nations Development Programme adviser in the field.

"We spent three months on a school site which was about one third of a hectare, and where there were 700 unexploded ordnances", said a foreign expert of the Unexploded Ordnance Clearance Programme.

These are the feelings of the people on the ground, at the grass-roots level in Laos, that may perhaps convey an idea of the situation there and how difficult it may be to overcome the problem of unexploded ordnance in our country. We urge the entire world community to give a serious look at the problem and to help us in addressing it in the most efficient way possible.

From 1964 to 1973, during the war, the Lao People's Democratic Republic endured intense ground battles and some of the heaviest aerial bombing in world history. Ground battles left a staggering amount of unexploded ordnance, such as mortar shells, munitions, landmines, and so on. The aerial bombing — 2 million tons for a population of 4.5 million — consisted of anti-personnel cluster bombs that were to explode on or shortly after impact.

Due to the lack of data, the bomblets, or "bombies" as we call them in Laos, can be found everywhere — in the fields, on the hill sides, inside villages, along roads and in the centre of towns. It is estimated that unexploded ordnance contamination still affects up to 50 per cent of Laos's total land mass and 12 out of the 16 provinces — namely, Attopeu, Bolikhamsay, Champassak, Houaphan, Khammouane, Luang Prabang, Oudomsay, Saravane, Savannakhet, Sekong, Vientiane and Xiang Khouang.

Now, more than 20 years since the war ended, we have no systematic national programme of unexploded ordnance clearance or community awareness. Interventions and a number of small projects, however, have been launched in specific localities to deal with the problem.

In 1975, after the war, the former Soviet Union provided us with equipment as well as technical assistance and training to assist in unexploded ordnance clearance. In early 1984, the American Friends Service Committee and the Mennonite Central Committee, two United States non-governmental organizations, provided thousands of shovels to farmers in Xiang Khouang and Houaphan provinces as a safer alternative to the use of traditional hoes for hand-tilling of ordnance-infested areas. Ecoles sans Frontières and World Vision International have produced educational materials about the hazards of unexploded ordnance and have distributed them in areas affected by unexploded ordnance. On a commercial basis, a number of companies have cleared nearly 200 hectares of land in support of irrigation, road and mining projects financed either by aid donors or by private investors.

The United States military has cleared some land of unexploded ordnance to ensure the safety of joint American-Lao teams conducting field investigations regarding American personnel missing in action in Laos. In the framework of an American-sponsored drug control rural development project in Houaphan province, the United States has also undertaken some clearance activities.

From 1994 to early 1996, the Mines Advisory Group, a British non-governmental organization, and the Mennonite Central Committee, a United States non-governmental organization, launched an unexploded ordnance eradication project in Xiang Khouang Province. The project has been able to train 40 Lao clearance technicians and has developed a community awareness component to reduce the number of unexploded ordnance-related accidents in Xiang Khouang.

On 1 August 1995, aware of the tragic aftereffects of war, in particular in the form of landmines and unexploded ordnance, the Lao Government, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), established a Trust Fund for the clearance of unexploded ordnance. A national programme has been initiated, the objective of which is to reduce the number of civilian casualties and increase the amount of land available for food production and other development activities. Here, our aim is to put in place a long-term, sustainable and nationally directed programme that includes unexploded ordnance clearance, community awareness, surveys and other related activities.

In May 1996, under UNDP auspices, international journalists from Europe, Asia and the United States of America visited Laos to see the problems caused by unexploded ordnance and the strategies of the Government in dealing with them. Last July, following its visit, CNN prepared a half-hour programme that it disseminated throughout the world. For the same purpose of publicizing the work being undertaken, the United Nations Department of Public Information produced a short video. We are grateful to them and thank them all wholeheartedly for helping us in mobilizing the necessary financial resources for the Trust Fund.

While 1996 fund-raising for the first year's programme seems to be quite satisfactory — along with UNDP and UNICEF, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and private donors

have made contributions — efforts are now being focused on securing funds for the medium-term future. It would greatly help the Laos authorities concerned in their efforts to elaborate a long-term sustainable programme if pledges could be made in advance and on a multi-year basis. To this end, UNDP and many friendly countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, Norway, the United States of America and Germany, have already committed funding to future programme activities up to 1998-1999.

Allow me to seize this opportunity, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, to express our sincere thanks to all donor countries and organizations for their important financial contributions to the Trust Fund. It is our hope that other friendly countries will also find it possible to make contributions to the Fund.

Our national programme is ambitious. To implement it is a daunting task. We feel, however, that, with the support and cooperation of the world community, this programme can be put into concrete action.

Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): The figures put forward to describe the scale and severity of the humanitarian crisis caused by the global proliferation of landmines vary from estimate to estimate. The facts behind the figures, however, remain the same. The social, economic and environmental impact is tremendous. With regard to the humanitarian dimension, one would be inclined to believe that the sheer atrocity of reports about children at play being killed or maimed by "forgotten" anti-personnel landmines should be enough to make everybody understand the urgent need for an immediate ban of these weapons, which indiscriminately bring about death and mutilation. And yet, anti-personnel landmines continue to be produced, exported and used.

At the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, held at Geneva in April and May this year, Liechtenstein officially joined those countries that had expressed their support for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines, wishing to help the campaign gather strength and to contribute to creating the political environment necessary for achieving a total ban. Given the human misery caused by landmines every day, the Liechtenstein Government considers it of utmost importance to maintain the momentum for a global ban and to translate it, as soon as possible, into the conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. My delegation therefore wholeheartedly welcomes the results of the Ottawa International Strategy Conference as well as the offer by the Government of Belgium to host a follow-on conference in Brussels in June of next year.

Freeing the world of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines is a manifold endeavour. Even if the continuing emplacement of landmines were stopped immediately — a hypothesis unfortunately still far from reality — the overall number of landmines already scattered around the world makes it clear that international efforts in mine clearance would still have to be increased. The draft resolution before us today constitutes an important means of coordinating and concerting the activities of the international community in this respect. For this reason, Liechtenstein has decided to co-sponsor this draft resolution, as it has done in the past, and we hope that the text will be adopted by consensus.

The task of demining mine-infested countries is still monumental and the responsibility for mine clearance lies first and foremost with the parties responsible for laying them. The development of national and local mine-clearance capacities plays an important role in tackling the striking imbalance between the number of mines already cleared and those still threatening the lives of civilians in those countries. At the same time, the promotion of technical improvements to maximize the effectiveness of mine detection and humanitarian mine-clearance operations is urgently needed. While commending the initiatives already taken by some countries to promote research and development of new mine-clearance technologies, we wish to stress the importance of effective coordination of all activities related to mine clearance by the United Nations through its focal point, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance was established in order to strengthen this coordination role of the United Nations. Liechtenstein has contributed to this Fund.

As long as millions of landmines keep threatening the lives and living conditions of civilians in many countries, promoting awareness, *inter alia*, through educational measures, of the dangers posed by landmines, especially among children, is crucial to preventing these vicious weapons from taking a much heavier toll. However, where all efforts of the international community have failed and a mine has fulfilled its devastating task, mine victims must be an essential part of the international community's integrated approach to the landmine crisis. In this connection, we wish to

commend the untiring efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of non-governmental organizations in providing medical care and psychological support to the victims of landmines in order to facilitate their full reintegration and participation in society.

All available figures on the extent and complexity of the landmine crisis make clear that the commitment of the international community to overcoming the crisis must be firm and lasting. We strongly hope that the adoption of the draft resolution before us by the General Assembly will contribute to a further significant strengthening of political will and collective energies to enhance the efforts to free the world of this scourge.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is very encouraging that so many Governments and international organizations are becoming fully aware of the suffering and tragedy caused by the use of anti-personnel landmines. Guatemala has strongly condemned the production, manufacture, stockpiling, sale and planting of mines. My country has had tragic and painful experience of the physical and psychological effects of landmines.

In this extremely crucial moment in Central American history — as we move towards reconstruction, rehabilitation and the search for a firm and lasting peace after lengthy years of conflict, with their serious social repercussions, countless dead and missing, economic marginalization and hundreds of thousands of injured and handicapped — this is a matter of great urgency.

The social repercussions of planting anti-personnel landmines complicate and hinder the return of refugees and displaced persons, who are vital to consolidating peace processes; affect economic productivity, since agricultural lands that were mined during conflicts cannot be used even long after the conflicts have ended; and delay the provision of essential social services, such as medical care, that had already been weakened by prolonged years of strife.

My country shares the pain and suffering of those who, in so many countries, have fallen victim to landmines. Guatemala has made great efforts, with international assistance, to carry out mine clearance despite financial restrictions and the scope and variety of the responsibilities borne by various sectors. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. We urge the international community to eliminate bellicose language and anti-personnel landmines and we wholeheartedly support all actions leading to their prohibition, as reflected in our support for the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, as well as its three Protocols. Similarly, we welcome the recent ratifications of and accessions to that Convention.

We note with satisfaction the holding of international conferences on this item: the Pledging Conference on mine clearance, held in Geneva in July 1995, as well as the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology, held in Denmark in 1996. We also support the statements made on the matter at meetings such as the Lyon and Cartagena summits and the International Strategy Conference held at Ottawa in October this year.

Similarly, we welcome the offer of the Government of Belgium to hold the follow-on conference to the Ottawa Conference at Brussels in 1997, and the conference on anti-personnel landmines to take place at Tokyo in March 1997.

The delegation of Guatemala thanks the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/51/540, on United Nations assistance in mine clearance, and other noteworthy documents. It also thanks the Member States, international organizations and foundations that have made contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

My country's delegation welcomes the overwhelming adoption on 13 November 1996 of draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.46, entitled "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines". The draft resolution, which was sponsored by 85 countries, including Guatemala, received 141 votes in favour, none against and just 10 abstentions in the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We believe that the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance just introduced by the representative of Ireland, in its capacity as current holder of the Presidency on behalf of the European Union, merits adoption by consensus.

These resolutions on landmines have both humanitarian and political components that address assistance to victims. But we also expect firm support for countries that suffer from that scourge, whose economies are based on agriculture, and where the recovery of agricultural land takes 20 or 30 years and even longer, meaning under-development, economic backwardness and

lack of productivity. In the future, measures must be drastic and ongoing.

My delegation welcomes the decision of several countries to declare temporary or permanent moratoriums covering some aspects of anti-personnel mines, such as the production, sale, stockpiling or total prohibition of mines, and awaits even more meaningful action.

The fundamental issue is and will continue to be the total ban on anti-personnel landmines in all their aspects. The objective is not to exchange existing mines for more modern or sophisticated ones. The objective is to eliminate them entirely from the arsenal, the market, and the language of war in general. We believe that each demining operation must be treated as a separate case, based on the geographical situation of the victim country, the origins of the conflict and the customs and traditions of the population that apply to it.

Guatemala supports the strengthening of the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, as well as the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, established at the Geneva Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that my Government will support all those efforts aimed at resolving landmine problems, and particularly the conclusion of an international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines.

Mr. Osman (Afghanistan): The relevant authorities of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, pursuant to the resolution entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", will address the problem of landmines from two aspects: first, the problems caused by the increasing presence of mines and other unexploded devices resulting from armed conflicts; and second, the manner in which the United Nations contribution to resolving the problems related to mine clearance could be strengthened.

Afghanistan thanks the Secretary-General for his report on assistance in mine clearance and draws the attention of the United Nations to the country's particular problem: the presence of 10 million landmines planted in Afghan soil during the 14 years of armed aggression in the 1980s and by forces aided from the outside in the later conflict in Afghanistan. In his report on the work of the Organization in previous years, the Secretary-General has said that of all the tasks involved in setting a nation on a new road to peace and prosperity, perhaps none has the immediate urgency of mine clearance. No attempt to restore a sense of community and security can succeed without effective landmine clearance.

According to the United Nations, of the 10 war-stricken countries and territories, Afghanistan is the most seriously affected country in the world as far as landmines are concerned. Surely, the gravity and cruelty of the threat to Afghan lives as a result of the existence of millions of landmines and other unexploded ordnance on Afghan soil cannot be overemphasized. The problem has seriously jeopardized all efforts geared not only to reconstruction and the rehabilitation and repatriation of refugees, but above all to the restoration of peace and normalcy and the basic human services.

The landmine is also known as a weapon of mass destruction in slow motion, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/50/701 of 3 November 1995. Mines are used indiscriminately and as a result about 100,000 innocent civilians have been maimed or lost their lives, as reported by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Landmines have disrupted daily life in Afghanistan and their impact on agriculture, livestock and transportation has been immense. Afghanistan's roads have been devastated because of landmines. Afghanistan, as a landlocked country, depends heavily on its transit routes. But we recognize and appreciate the efforts of the United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), and other States for their assistance in demining.

Nevertheless, there is more to be done, especially in the field of the rehabilitation of victims, anti-personnel landmine clearance and the development of the better techniques needed to clear the 10 million landmines already deployed in Afghanistan.

We also recognize the active participation of the countries of the European Union and Canada and United States assistance efforts in landmine clearance and its concern over the ending of landmine awareness and clearance training for women and children. We also express gratitude to Japan, Germany and Belgium, which offered to host conferences on anti-personnel landmines next year.

It is worth mentioning that our nation, like many least developed and small countries, may not be able to contribute financially, but it is prepared to provide all

kinds of facilities for the work of technical experts in mine clearance. Afghanistan strongly supports and is a sponsor of the draft resolution on assistance in landmine clearance.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again the humanitarian crisis caused by the laying of anti-personnel landmines has led the General Assembly to speak out, with a view to finding agreed ways and means to resolve the social and economic consequences of this scourge.

We note with satisfaction that this year important progress has been made multilaterally, including the holding at Ottawa on 5 October of an international conference to establish a global ban on anti-personnel mines; the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held at Elsinore, Denmark, from 2 to 4 July; the sponsorship of more than 120 States of the draft resolution to be introduced by the United States on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines; and the upcoming international conferences on the matter to be held at Tokyo, Japan, in March 1997 and in Belgium in June 1997.

These new undertakings are clear and firm signals from the international community on the need to resolve the deadly catastrophe caused by the proliferation and use of anti-personnel mines. In this context, we thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the activities of the Organization, which are aptly reflected in the report recently submitted to the General Assembly.

We believe that that report is very clear on the work carried out by each of the departments and agencies of the United Nations system. We consider that the objective of the various mine-clearance programmes should be the establishment of a sustainable national mechanism for mine clearance.

We believe that the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in promoting security procedures for mine clearance and the search for new and improved technologies is very important. We value that Department's work in updating and expanding the United Nations database on landmines, which is the world's largest source of landmine information.

Argentina clearly and firmly holds that the proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines are important problems that call for priority consideration. In that context, my country firmly believes that there is an immediate need to solve the humanitarian problems resulting from the planting of anti-personnel landmines. We believe that the first step in that direction should the adoption of an international treaty banning landmines, including their production, transfer and stockpiling. Those prohibitions would make it possible to put an end to the continuing escalation in the number of mines and their devastating humanitarian consequences.

We believe that the future treaty should be the result of intensive negotiations among all States; by this we mean those States affected by the indiscriminate laying of mines and those States producing them. To consider a treaty that does not have the support of those States would be to create an instrument that would be sterile in terms of its future legal effects.

We hope that the next time we meet here on this item we will have a treaty that will help do away with what the Secretary-General calls "an intolerable blemish on civilization". (*A/51/540, para. 112*)

Mr. McCook (Jamaica): In welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on agenda item 34, "Assistance in mine clearance", we must state that we are deeply troubled by the suffering caused by the effects of landmines in conflict and post-conflict situations around the globe.

The report provides chilling statistics that demonstrate the magnitude of the problem posed by landmines. It estimates that over 110 million landmines are buried in some 70 countries, that over 25,000 mine-related casualties occur each year, with most of the victims being civilians, many of them children. It concludes that in excess of $50 billion will be needed to clear landmines now laid.

Throughout the regions affected by landmines, life remains perilous. Children play at the risk of their lives, and adults undertake their tasks in a precarious gamble with death and dismemberment.

The facts presented in the report underscore the importance of this mission of mine clearance for the United Nations system and supportive national and international bodies. Indeed, they demonstrate dramatically the need for further concerted action by the international community to deal with the problems posed by landmines around the globe.

We support the efforts to train more and more persons in the techniques of demining and to develop new

and improved technologies for mine clearance. We commend the Government of Denmark for its initiative in convening the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held in July of this year with the support of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

It is a sad fact that many nations beleaguered by conflicts and their aftermath have to contend with the tremendous costs of caring for victims of landmine explosions. The plight of these societies already severely traumatized by conflict is made worse by the health care crisis that results from the need to commit scarce facilities and human and financial resources to the care of landmine victims.

Their condition is made worse by the fact that landmines pose severe impediments to economic growth; they render agricultural areas useless, restrict commercial movement and generally have a destabilizing effect on the economic sector. These combined concerns reinforce the need for all members of the international community to be committed to the task of dealing with the effects of landmines.

In this connection, it is pleasing to note that the Voluntary Trust Fund for demining support has been able to make an impact on the programmes of mine clearance undertaken with United Nations support. We expect the Fund to provide continued support for this important activity, and we commend the donors that have contributed to its growth.

We commend the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for its far-reaching efforts in the field of mine clearance. We also commend the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the demining activities undertaken in the context of peacekeeping operations. We are particularly pleased that there is close coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant agencies in these endeavours.

My delegation supports the initiatives to develop programmes that include national involvement, in terms of both the training of local demining personnel and the development of national bodies for the coordination of demining efforts. These initiatives, coupled with public information and public education activities designed to alert communities to the dangers posed by landmines, are all vitally important. We commend the Department of Public Information and media organizations that have lent support to these programmes.

Finally, we wish to address two critical areas of action on which the international community must focus if it is effectively to address this problem for the medium and long term. The first is concerted research and development in the area of demining technology, and the other is a commitment to stop the use of anti-personnel landmines. We must retreat from the development and use of these weapons, whose indiscriminate and inhumane effects outweigh any strategic value ascribed to them. Let us consider above all the tragic toll that landmines have taken and will continue to take on innocent civilians, including children, and act boldly to bring to an end the use of these devices.

Mr. Benítez Sáenz (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Uruguay is pleased that the General Assembly is once again considering the item on assistance in mine clearance and will consider a draft resolution on assistance in dealing with the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of these lethal devices. We believe that that initiative will be adopted by consensus, as has been the case in previous years.

My country will once again be a sponsor of the draft resolution on assistance in mine clearance in the conviction that the international community must take urgent steps to deal with and begin to resolve the material and economic consequences of these weapons. Uruguayan contingents in Angola, Mozambique and Western Sahara have had to face the risks associated with mine-clearance activities, and have suffered casualties as a result. We are very much aware of the tragic consequences of these weapons that have been accurately described as weapons of mass destruction, especially for the civilian population, and most particularly for children. That is why we have spoken out repeatedly against the transfer, stockpiling and production of anti-personnel landmines.

Uruguay has a decidedly humanitarian approach to the problem and supports the views expressed by the Secretary-General in focusing on the impact of armed conflict on children. In this respect, we should like to reiterate our belief that children must not continue to be exposed to the death and mutilation caused by anti-personnel landmines. We understand that we are faced with a serious threat and believe that the international community must be active in mine clearance. We pledge to do our utmost to achieve an international agreement prohibiting the use of anti-personnel landmines.

My country spoke out clearly at the Security Council meeting on 15 August 1996, when the Council

considered demining within the context of peacekeeping operations, and firmly believes in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations programmes on the security, health and right to life of the personnel who selflessly participate in humanitarian, peacekeeping and rehabilitation operations. We know that the cost of mine clearance is very high, and technological progress to improve detection instruments requires international cooperation. However, what is even more important is that we do not continue to lose lives. The figures of human lives lost have already reached a level that is more than alarming. It is up to all of us to prevent more deaths.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.74

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

74th plenary meeting
Thursday, 5 December 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 34 *(continued)*

Assistance in mine clearance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/540)

Mrs. Peña Zeledón (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Since the beginning of the debate on the item entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", my delegation has spoken on and co-sponsored the resolutions on this item that have been adopted by the General Assembly. We have done this to demonstrate the enormous importance Nicaragua attaches to the problem of landmines and to their destruction.

Nicaragua is a country of 130,000 square kilometres, yet it has 100,000 landmines left over from 10 long years of civil war. The well known repercussions of these deadly weapons include ongoing irreparable loss to our economy, and problems for refugees returning home. The enormous number of displaced persons in urban areas is alarming, given the health problems related to deficient basic services. These are some of the consequences of landmines in countries that suffer from this scourge, whose primary victims are innocent civilians and children.

It is essential that the international community continue to provide consistent cooperation in mine clearance, because the countries affected by this problem cannot solve it by themselves. These efforts must be accompanied by action to prevent the proliferation of these arms, or else those of the international community in mine clearance will be in vain.

In this context, we recognize the need to reach an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, as stated in the draft resolution adopted in the First Committee. We welcome the various prohibitions, moratoriums and other restrictions in place on anti-personnel landmines.

Nicaragua, firmly resolved to explore new ways of dealing with this scourge — both in its statement in the general debate in the First Committee and in its capacity as acting secretary of the countries of the Central American region — supported the establishment of a register of landmines as a specific means of encouraging trust and transparency and to control more effectively the use, transfer and indiscriminate production of landmines.

The United Nations has been providing assistance in mine clearance since 1994 through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. It has exerted efforts to strengthen international instruments to counteract this modern epidemic through the convening of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

96-87004 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We regret that the Conference did not achieve the hoped for success due to a lack of political will, which prevented progress towards the actual prohibition that the international community had so desired. We trust, however, that the mechanism for annual consultations and the commitment to hold another review conference in five years reflect our sincere desire to move ahead towards our common goal: the complete elimination of this kind of weapon.

The experience of El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that there must be very close coordination, particularly in the areas of mine clearance, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. My delegation would like to emphasize that more resources must be made available to the Secretariat, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for mine-clearance programmes.

We trust that the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance will have sufficient resources to play a more active role in the financing of demining programmes and thereby to extend its programmes to an ever larger number of affected countries. We welcome the initiative of Germany to raise this issue in the Security Council last August, which resulted in a fruitful debate and offered new ways of dealing with these deadly weapons.

Consistent with this, the Council of Ministers of Central America, which met in Guatemala on 12 September this year, decided to declare Central America a zone free from anti-personnel landmines, in which the production, possession, acquisition or transfer of these weapons is prohibited.

We would also point out that, at the twenty-sixth session of the Organization of American States, held in the Republic of Panama last June 1996, a resolution entitled "Support for Mine-Clearing in Central America" was adopted. This drew attention to the ongoing and serious problem of landmines and their effects in the Central American region.

My delegation appreciates the contribution of those countries that have always been willing to provide assistance in the area of technology for mine clearance. We firmly believe that even the most advanced technology cannot eradicate completely the problems caused by mines. We would reiterate that a final solution to the problem of mines is the complete ban of the production, transfer and stockpiling of this kind of weapon.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the activities being undertaken by the United Nations in mine clearance. I would also like to thank the Government of Denmark for circulating the report of the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology, held at Elsinore. Both reports outline interesting proposals and ideas and provide a good basis for further work in finding ways and means to tackle the problems caused by the indiscriminate use of landmines.

Over 110 million mines are today scattered in more than 70 countries. Up to 25,000 men, women and children are maimed or killed each year by landmines. Around 250,000 people have lost their limbs to landmines. It will cost over $1 billion for their treatment and rehabilitation.

Landmines have caused social and economic havoc in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, Afghanistan alone has almost 10 million mines scattered all over the country. Thousands of Afghan refugees maimed by landmines have been treated in hospitals and rehabilitation centres in Pakistan. We continue to host over 1.5 million Afghan refugees, some of whom have now been stranded in Pakistan for over 17 years, as they cannot return to their country due to the landmines planted in their homeland.

It is encouraging to note that the international community fully realizes the menace of landmines. In recent years, concerted efforts have been made to clear unexploded mines and to alleviate the suffering of the landmine victims. Governmental and non-governmental organizations have launched campaigns to provide resources and technology for mine-clearance operations. The United Nations has played an important role in sensitizing the general public and in generating resources for mine-clearance operations.

The work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as a focal point for United Nations humanitarian mine-clearance operations, is praiseworthy. A Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance has been established. A number of international conferences have been held or are being planned to examine ways and means effectively to tackle the problem of unexploded landmines.

Despite those encouraging developments, the efforts of the international community to deal with this problem

have not been adequate. One area which needs urgent attention is the provision of sufficient resources for mine-clearance operations. The contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund have not been enough. Response to requests for in-kind contributions to establish a standby United Nations mine-clearance capability has been lukewarm. As mine-clearance operations require a continuous flow of resources, voluntary contributions would not be sufficient effectively to address this issue.

According to the Secretary-General's report, between $50 billion and $100 billion would be required to rid the affected countries of this menace. At the present pace of clearing 100,000 mines per year, it would take many decades to overcome this crisis. We therefore need to pool our resources as well as enforce regulations to ensure universal adherence to existing multilateral instruments on the indiscriminate use of landmines. We also need to explore possibilities for establishing international mechanisms that call upon the States responsible for using mines indiscriminately to pay for mine-clearance operations.

Reflecting the gravity of the problem, Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was amended recently. Steps now need be taken to ensure universal adherence to the Convention and its Protocols. We believe that further measures could also be considered in relevant multilateral forums to address the problems arising out of the indiscriminate use of landmines.

Ms. Coelho da Cruz (Angola): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/51/540 and congratulates the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for its role in the coordination of our national mine action programme.

My Government attaches great importance to the question of mine clearance and has made every effort to carry out successfully the ongoing demining process in cooperation with the United Nations system.

As members know, my country was immersed in a civil war that lasted more than 30 years and, as a result, carries the burden of approximately 70,000 amputees, 8,000 of whom are children, victims of the mines planted during the war. The implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, signed two years ago, allowed the establishment of a mine programme in the most affected areas.

The programme experienced some delays due to the complexity of the process and a lack of close cooperation from UNITA, which was also involved in the process. However, the National Institute for the Removal of Explosive Obstacles, established for that purpose, pursues its mission with dedication. The demining of access routes is a priority in order to facilitate free movement of people, goods and United Nations personnel in charge of the humanitarian assistance programmes. Of the estimated 15 million mines strewn across the country, more than 80,000 have been removed.

There are currently an estimated 110 million mines buried in the ground in more than 70 countries. My delegation considers the question of landmines one of the most important and urgent issues before the international community. The mines left by war represent one of the major obstacles to economic development and to the return of displaced persons to their homes.

Angola supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to mobilize the international community and the United Nations Member States to provide the human, financial and material support necessary to address the world crisis caused by mines. My delegation also shares the Secretary-General's opinion that the cost of caring for mine victims is a heavy burden for weak societies recovering from conflict. We need to pursue parallel approaches if we are to tackle the root causes of the problem and move towards a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. At the same time, the promotion of technical improvements to maximize the effectiveness of mine detection and humanitarian mine-clearance operations is urgently needed.

The convening in May of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which made some amendments to Protocol II on mines, the International Conference on Mine-Clearance Technology, held in July in Denmark, the Security Council's open debate in August, and, most recently, the Ottawa Conference, demonstrate that the issue is receiving significant political consideration and encourage the follow-up of those initiatives.

My delegation hopes that the concrete proposals launched at today's debate will lead to concrete proposals for practical improvements of demining efforts. In that context, it appeals to the Member States to honour their pledges to the Voluntary Trust Fund, the focal point for United Nations mine-clearance activities.

Before concluding, I would like, on behalf of my Government, to express my appreciation to the United

Nations system and to the Governments and non-governmental organizations that contribute to the demining programme in Angola with courage and dedication and to pay tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives on behalf of mine victims.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative report on assistance in mine clearance, as contained in document A/51/540. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the courageous efforts of United Nations personnel and to individuals from non-governmental organizations and other international organizations who have been instrumental in establishing and implementing mine-clearance programmes.

The grim severity and pervasiveness of the danger posed by landmines call for a concerted response at the global level. Ever since the General Assembly first took up the issue of assistance in mine clearance at its forty-eighth session in 1993, support in the international community for humanitarian mine-clearance activities has steadily increased.

An encouraging sign of this changing mood has been the establishment and subsequent expansion of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. Since its launching in November 1994 by the Secretary-General, it has become the principal mechanism for financing humanitarian mine-related activities, particularly in their critical early stages. My delegation is pleased to note that $32.7 million has so far been pledged to the Fund and we look forward to this figure increasing in the years to come. The Government of the Republic of Korea, for its part, will contribute $100,000 to the Fund next year, adding to its contribution this year of the same amount.

My delegation also welcomes the outcome of the mine-clearance Pledging Conference held in Geneva in July 1995 and the valuable impetus it has given to the international community's efforts to raise the considerable funds needed to implement mine-action programmes, promote greater public awareness of landmine issues and further strengthen international cooperation in this regard.

By making land impassable, unharvestable and uninhabitable, landmines present a broad and multifaceted threat. They can paralyse peacekeeping operations, humanitarian relief and, in the long run, severely stunt a country's post-conflict economic reconstruction and development.

A comprehensive threat calls for a comprehensive solution and the mine-action programmes we undertake must therefore carefully integrate and coordinate the roles of all organizations involved, whether they be United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations or other international organizations.

Of all the United Nations bodies involved in mine clearance, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have played the most prominent roles in pioneering and implementing mine-clearance programmes. My delegation believes that close cooperation and coordination between these two Departments are essential to ensure that operational demining activities and humanitarian mine-action programmes are satisfactorily carried out in a complementary manner.

We believe that, in addition to improving coordination among the various organizations involved in mine clearance, the United Nations also needs an enhanced ability to respond rapidly to mine-related contingencies. In this regard, we support the further strengthening of the demining standby capacity so that the United Nations can initiate field operations with the same swiftness as non-governmental organizations and avoid the bureaucratic delays that can lead to needless civilian casualties.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, humanitarian mine-action programmes, although coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, often involve the participation of other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations. Whichever organizations are involved, however, it is vital to ensure that the objective of mine-action programmes remains the same: to build the indigenous mine-clearing capacity of countries affected, so that they can learn to help themselves.

Ultimately, the main responsibility for mine clearance lies with the country affected. After all, complete mine clearance will almost certainly require a longer time-frame than any United Nations country programme can sustain. Before that time elapses, however, the United Nations and other involved agencies or non-governmental organizations can do much to develop a repository of mine-clearance know-how in countries affected.

Landmines are a threat to the international community, less because of their explosive power than

because of the indiscriminate and inhumane manner in which they have been used. A shocking 110 million mines are believed to be currently scattered in more than 70 countries. And every year, these hidden killers kill or maim an estimated 25,000 people. To control this carnage, we need to improve the coordination, funding and technology of mine clearance.

In this regard, we welcome the timely offers of some interested Governments to host international conferences on demining issues next year. We sincerely hope that those meetings will contribute greatly to reinforcing international support for the work of the United Nations in mine clearance and to accelerating progress towards the safer, faster and more effective demining methods so badly needed now.

It is important to recognize, however, that mine clearance can only be a part of the solution. Because the number of mines laid each year far outstrips the number being cleared, mine clearance must not be our only remedy. It must be part of an integrated, comprehensive effort to control not only the planting and usage of mines, but also their production and transfer. Indeed, we need to seek solutions that address both the supply-side and end-user side of the landmine problem.

My Government shares the deep concern of the international community over the scourge of landmines, both because of the brutal suffering they impose upon innocent civilians and the paralysis they can inflict upon a country's economic and social development. Eliminating the tragic human cost of these weapons will require the international community to address the whole spectrum of problems that landmines cause, ranging from humanitarian to disarmament issues. In this context, my Government recently extended its export moratorium on anti-personnel mines for one additional year and, for humanitarian reasons, is now positively considering accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, including the amended Protocol II.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its conviction that no nation can overlook the horrendous magnitude of the landmine problem. It has become a global crisis that requires a global response. It is natural, therefore, that the United Nations play a leading role in solving the problem and in guiding the international community in its efforts to find a comprehensive solution.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The presence of 110 million landmines is a major economic and human problem — an international problem which every year claims 25,000 civilian victims — over and above the fact that it prevents both the return of displaced persons to their homes and post-conflict reconstruction.

That is why we support the proposals on this issue contained in the Secretary-General's report. The true dimensions of this problem can clearly be seen when it is set against the background of the technical and material restrictions on demining that prevent any easy or rapid implementation and when we consider the risks and costs that make it prohibitive to individual countries. For this reason, Egypt believes that the international conferences and meetings on landmines that have been held in 1996 constitute a good basis for launching serious and concrete efforts to destroy mines already laid, as well as to restrict the proliferation of new mines in the future. These meetings include the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, held in Geneva early this year, which led to the adoption of amended Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines; the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology, held in Denmark; the Ottawa Conference on the prohibition of landmines within the context of peacekeeping operations; and meetings of the Security Council on the same subject.

Our interest in these meetings focused on the priorities that Governments attach to demining activities, because Egypt is among those countries with the greatest number of landmines planted in their territory. They are mainly in the western part of the country, where large-scale military operations took place during the Second World War. In describing the horror of this problem, which has been described by others elsewhere, I am not exaggerating in saying that there are 23 million landmines of various power and types. The existence of this enormous quantity of landmines on our territory is a concrete danger in the daily lives of civilians. Furthermore, it sets up economic and technical obstacles to construction, urban growth and other development in the medium and long term. Egypt has made a great many efforts and spent millions of dollars on demining. From 1981 to 1991, 11 million mines were neutralized and, in July 1991, Egypt launched a new plan aimed at neutralizing all remaining mines — 23 million of them — by the year 2006.

Although the United Nations has confirmed the existence of that number of mines, the report of the Secretary-General does not refer specifically to this subject. Egypt is not on the list of countries most affected by landmines, which seriously restricts its eligibility for assistance from United Nations demining programmes coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We hope that this will be corrected as soon as possible, so that we can more easily reach the objectives set by the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

To illustrate the scope of the problem faced by Egypt, it is sufficient to consider the report of the Secretary-General, which points out that the cost of neutralizing a single landmine is between $100 and $1,000, depending on several factors, including the quality of the mine, the nature of the terrain and, of course, the available technology. Faced with such problems, no governmental or non-governmental body in a country such as Egypt could, by itself, bear such a financial burden. It would be unreasonable for Egypt to have to bear alone the excessive cost of clearing these mines, which were not laid by Egyptians and never served any Egyptian interest whatsoever.

I take this opportunity to highlight, from this rostrum, the importance for the States responsible for laying such mines to carry out their major responsibilities in demining, by providing either technology or *matériel* for demining programmes. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of Egypt's ambitious programme would be improved if the countries to which I referred agreed to bear their responsibilities for demining by providing training or the necessary equipment and advanced technology for demining.

Our understanding of this problem is based on two major factors. The first relates to international efforts, which should be intensified so that the enormous quantity of landmines planted during earlier hostilities and wars can be cleared. The second factor is preventive and requires other countries to restrict their mine-laying activities — an action whose impact would go far beyond demining. On that basis, Egypt voted in the First Committee in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/51/L.46 on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, despite our conviction that it had many defects, including the fact that it did not refer to demining itself. We are in favour of a negotiating machinery, agreed upon in all transparency, aimed at reaching an international agreement restricting the use of landmines. Such an agreement should contain a clear international commitment to clearing all existing mines within a predetermined time-frame.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt would like to commend the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as well as other Departments that cooperate in demining, and their personnel. We would like to express our satisfaction with the fact that mine-action activities are currently taking place in nine countries and our hope that many more countries will join them. We call on all countries to participate in the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance so that these constantly growing programmes can be financed and new ones launched in 1997. We also endorse the assessment of the Secretary-General concerning the benefits that could be drawn from an annual donors' meeting to replenish the Fund.

We also agree that it is necessary to make major, sustained international efforts to deal with the consequences of landmines and their negative effects on development. We call for sustained international support for the efforts of the countries suffering from these problems and on Member States to provide and develop technology for further demining in a global context that would encompass the humanitarian, social, economic and other aspects of the problem.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The issue of landmines, with their lethal nature and collateral effects, has seriously concerned the international community over the past several years. The world is shocked by the monumental number of mines that infest various countries in conflict and post-conflict eras, as well as by the horrendous consequences of their indiscriminate use. This issue defies the imagination and demands comprehensive, yet prompt solutions. For its part, and as an affected State, the Islamic Republic of Iran has actively participated in the work of competent bodies dealing with landmines and has supported in principle any genuine initiative aimed at prohibiting all types of landmines, without exception.

Every month landmines claim 800 lives and maim more than 1,000 people. Such casualty levels surely charge the international community with the responsibility to respond to this compelling challenge and to spare no effort to alleviate this senseless human suffering.

My country appreciates the depth and magnitude of the many problems associated with mine clearance in

post-conflict cases. About 16 million landmines and unexploded devices were laid throughout more than 4 million hectares of Iranian territory temporarily occupied during different stages of the Iran-Iraq war. Over the past eight years, we have embarked upon a massive mine-clearance operation to enable civilians displaced by the war to return to their homes. Using manual demining methods, we have succeeded in neutralizing more than one third of all the mines and unexploded devices laid in our country. However, lack of access to mechanical mine-clearance equipment, as well as to maps of mine fields, has not only slowed our efforts, but has also caused casualties among innocent civilians and those involved in mine-clearance operations.

It is indeed ironic that the recent worldwide campaign to eliminate anti-personnel landmines has not been accompanied by the promotion of demining in affected States or the transfer of newer mine-clearance technologies to these countries. Various types of mechanical mine-clearance equipment continue to remain subject to discriminatory and unjustifiable export control regimes. In this regard, we call upon all States, especially those that have a capacity to do so, to go beyond their words and to provide technological assistance to mine-afflicted countries. They should also promote scientific research and development of humanitarian mine-clearance techniques and technology so that mine-clearance activities can be more effectively carried out at lower cost and through safer means.

The United Nations has a special role to play in this regard. The United Nations needs to ensure that no State applies any restrictions that would hinder or otherwise impede, in any manner, access to mine-clearance technology. At the same time, all States, particularly those which have the required technology and equipment for mine clearance, should declare to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs the kind of assistance, both financial and technical, that they can provide to mine-infested countries and to relevant United Nations programmes. It is indispensable for all serious United Nations programmes to facilitate the access of mine-stricken nations to the necessary machinery and technology for speedy and effective mine clearance.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This past year, we have seen the international community become increasingly aware of the serious and devastating effects of anti-personnel landmines. The reports of the Secretary-General, in particular that on the consequences of armed conflicts on children, have been very eloquent in this respect, as have the documents of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which point out that the victims of these inhumane weapons are primarily civilians, children, women, peasants and the city dwellers.

We also must note the recent International Strategy Conference that took place in Ottawa from 3 to 5 October, the goals of which were to arrive as quickly as possible at an international agreement totally banning anti-personnel landmines and to make the international community recognize the need to increase significantly the resources dedicated to demining operations and assistance to the victims. It is also important to note the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology that was held this past July in Denmark and the future international conferences on the subject to be held in Tokyo and Brussels in 1997.

All of this indicates that the international community is now trying to act decisively on the question of anti-personnel landmines. We note the achievements of the recent Geneva Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and in particular its amendment of Protocol II of the Convention. However, we regret that it was not possible to broaden the Convention to include a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that we cannot abandon our commitment to continue seeking agreement on this issue.

Given the progress made to date, we cannot forget that we must move towards prohibiting and completely eliminating this kind of weapon, because of its mass, indiscriminate and devastating effects, its long-term threat, its tragic human consequences and its widespread hindrance of the productive use of broad areas, particularly affecting those most in need and seriously jeopardizing the living conditions of many peoples. It is also important to eliminate such weapons because nobody today can be sure that, in addition to the States that employ them, criminal groups — if they are not doing so already — will not soon be making use of landmines, with unimaginable consequences.

Therefore, all States must comply with the international norms in force today regarding anti-personnel landmines and join in the efforts being made to improve the existing instruments. It is reprehensible that the States Members of the United Nations, under the

pretext of security, are seeking to preserve their ability to export these weapons. It is particularly serious and censurable that States that are parties to the Convention — and therefore explicitly bound by international instruments now in force — should be placing landmines in urban or otherwise populated areas, in flagrant violation of the norms of international law.

On earlier occasions, my country has stated and wishes to reiterate here that the proliferation and indiscriminate use of these devastating devices are sufficient reason for the international community to give urgent priority to this issue. Peru stands by its decision to work in this and other international forums to reach an international agreement banning the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, we were one of the sponsors of a draft resolution that was approved in the First Committee and which will be taken up by this Assembly in the next few days.

We would like to take this opportunity, however, to note that specific rules to make demining mandatory must be imposed on States that employ this practice and at the same time international cooperation on demining programmes must be strengthened. The responsibility of the States for harm caused to non-combatant victims, taking into account the delayed effects of these weapons and the damage they cause, especially after conflicts, must also be recognized.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The General Assembly will consider the draft resolution to be submitted under agenda item 34 at a later date, to be announced.

Agenda item 21 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/303, A/51/356, A/51/560)

Draft resolutions A/51/L.22, L.24/Rev.1, L.25/Rev.1/ L.30 and L.32/Rev.1

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolutions A/51/L.22, L.24/Rev.1, L.25/Rev.1, L.30 and L.32/Rev.1.

I call upon the representative of Lebanon to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Lebanon has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon", on behalf of the following sponsors: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Romania, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United States of America and Lebanon.

I believe that everyone is aware of the magnitude of Lebanon's requirements for reconstruction and development as a result of the long and devastating war it has experienced. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have adopted a number of resolutions on a regular basis in order to assist Lebanon. Indeed, the international community, the donor community and non-governmental organizations have responded very positively to those resolutions.

Today, Lebanon resembles a vast construction site for the reconstruction and development of the country. This is an example of the success that can be achieved through cooperation between the various elements of the international community and the recipient State. Lebanon has become a model of a country that is building peace after war.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates), Vice-President, took the Chair.

However, the requirements remain enormous, and the need for international assistance remains great. Indeed, there is an urgent need to develop the forms of such assistance, for an international consultative group on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Lebanon is soon to be established.

One of the major problems created by the war was the displacement of scores of thousands of persons from their homes and villages and the destruction of villages in various parts of the country, especially in the south. In addition, the return of peace and stability has helped the State to eliminate such illegal crops as marijuana, which, in turn, has led to an urgent need to develop alternative

crops in the areas where marijuana was formerly being grown illicitly, particularly in the area around Baalbeck-Hermel.

Therefore, the draft resolution reaffirms the pressing need to continue to assist the Government of Lebanon and, indeed, for an increase in such assistance, either in the form of soft loans or of financial grants, and for assistance to be given to the international consultative group and to the State for the return of displaced persons and their rehabilitation and reintegration in their regions and in the reconstruction and development of Baalbeck-Hermel and the south Lebanon region.

We hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now call upon the representative of the Congo to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.30.

Mr. Abibi (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.30, "Assistance to Mozambique", on behalf of the States members of the Group of African States and the following sponsors: Australia, Austria, China, France, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania and the United States of America.

The text of the draft resolution before the Assembly today is much the same as that of resolution 49/21 D, adopted on 20 December 1994, at the Assembly's forty-ninth session. The present text quite naturally reflects the positive developments that have occurred in Mozambique over the past two years, developments that were noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/560).

In the first preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalls previous resolutions and emphasizes the need to foster the establishment of a national mine-clearance capacity with a view to enabling the Government of Mozambique to deal more effectively with the adverse effects of such weapons within the framework of the efforts for national reconstruction. The last two preambular paragraphs are the same as those of the earlier resolution.

The operative portion of the draft resolution does not differ substantively from the earlier resolution, but we would nonetheless like to emphasize certain elements we consider to be of major importance. In operative paragraph 3, the Assembly welcomes the progress made in the consolidation of a lasting peace and tranquillity, the enhancement of democracy and the promotion of national reconciliation in Mozambique. The following operative paragraphs deal with questions of the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of Mozambican citizens from neighbouring countries.

As you know, this programme covers more than 1.7 million Mozambican citizens and is considered to be one of the largest and most successful programmes undertaken under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In paragraph 5, the Assembly stresses that Mozambique has made significant progress in mitigating the consequences of a devastating war and that continued substantial coordinated international assistance is required to assist the country in addressing its development needs, in particular with regard to the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers.

Paragraph 6 urges those that have a capacity to do so to contribute to mine clearance and to continue to provide the needed assistance with a view to enabling the Government of Mozambique to develop its national mine-clearance capacity.

The draft resolution takes into account paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General on "Assistance to Mozambique", which states:

> "Starting in 1995, political and economic transition in Mozambique has shown promising signs of a return to stability and normality: peace, national reconciliation and the vitality of the young democracy have taken root; parliamentary performance improved noticeably; one has witnessed an open, free and lively interface between government, legislature and media; overall the social climate remained calm; resettlement of internally displaced people and returning refugees was consolidated; reintegration of demobilized soldiers has been relatively free of major disruption; the mine-clearance programme proceeded at a reasonable pace; reconstruction and economic reform made further progress; the re-emerging domestic private sector has become increasingly dynamic." *(A/51/560)*

We are convinced that the adoption by consensus by the General Assembly of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.30 would convey a particularly strong

message of solidarity on the part of the international community and a real encouragement to Mozambicans in their efforts to consolidate peace, strengthen democracy, promote national reconciliation and cope with their development needs.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Djibouti to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1.

Mr. Dorani (Djibouti) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.32.Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti", on behalf of the following sponsors: Angola, Belize, Cameroon, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Gabon, Haiti, Honduras, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

The structure of the draft is similar to that of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year. The text reiterates the socio-economic problems facing Djibouti, including the recurrent problem of cyclical droughts, the presence of refugees and the prolonged consequences of earlier regional conflicts, particularly the one in Somalia. These factors, taken together, have created a difficult economic and financial situation in Djibouti.

In the operative part of the draft resolution the General Assembly welcomes the implementation by the Government of Djibouti of the structural adjustment programme and, in that context, appeals to the international community to participate actively in the round table on Djibouti which will take place in February 1997 with a view to responding urgently in an appropriate manner to the financial and material needs of Djibouti. It also requests the Secretary-General to prepare a study of the progress made in time for the question to be considered by the General Assembly at its next session.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/51/L.22, A/51/L.24/Rev.1, A/51/L.25/Rev.1, A/51/L.30 and A/51/L.32/Rev.1.

We turn first to draft resolution A/51/L.22, entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".

The sponsors of this draft resolution also include the Czech Republic.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.22?

Draft resolution A/51/L.22 was adopted (resolution 51/30 A).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia".

Pakistan should be added to the sponsors listed.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.24/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 B).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.25/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 C).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.30, entitled "Assistance to Mozambique".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.30?

Draft resolution A/51/L.30 was adopted (resolution 51/30 D).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/51/L.32/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 51/30 E).

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to inform the Assembly that action on other draft resolutions submitted or to be submitted under agenda item 21 will be taken at a later date to be announced.

Programme of work

The President: I should now like to share with you some information pertaining to the status of the Assembly's work at its current session.

I am happy to inform you that all Main Committees, with the exception of the Fifth Committee, have for the most part completed their work as scheduled, that is, by 29 November — the Second Committee concluded on 2 December 1996. I wish to congratulate the Chairmen, Bureaux, delegates and Secretariat members who have made this possible. It proves that we can complete our work on time.

As announced on Tuesday, 3 December, the plenary will consider the reports of the First Committee on 10 December. I will inform you tomorrow of the dates for consideration of the reports of the other Main Committees. These dates will depend on the status of documentation, which is influenced by when the Main Committees submit their reports for processing.

As all of you are aware, we agreed at the outset of the fifty-first session that this session would recess on 17 December. In this regard, I wish to appeal to all of you to help me conclude the remaining work, especially the consideration of and action on items which must be concluded before we recess. Between today and 17 December, we have a total of eight — repeat eight — working days left.

Much more work remains to be done in the plenary meetings and in the Fifth Committee.

As regards organizational working methods, I am glad to report that virtually all the Main Committees that have completed their work succeeded in doing so well within the scheduled number of meetings. For instance, the Fourth Committee concluded its work using only 22 of the 30 meetings allocated.

Punctuality, coupled with time limits on statements and deadlines, helped all these Committees to accomplish their objectives. Before this session adjourns, I hope to share with you the notional savings made as a result of these improved working methods.

At the same time, I must point out that Economic and Social Council meetings, which were held during the General Assembly session, conflicted with the meetings of the Second and Third Committees and caused delays in the consideration of items. I hope this can be avoided in the future.

In terms of resolutions and decisions, most of the Main Committees, with the exception of the Second Committee, recommended for adoption by the General Assembly about the same number of resolutions as in previous years.

The First Committee recommended for adoption 48 resolutions and decisions this year, compared to 49 in 1995; the Second Committee recommended 28, as compared to 43 in 1995; the Third Committee recommended 66 this year, as compared to 65 last year; the Fourth Committee recommended 26 resolutions and 4 decisions this year, as compared to 23 resolutions and 5 decisions last year; and the Sixth Committee recommended 14 resolutions and one decision this year, as opposed to 13 resolutions and one decision last year.

As you can see, the Second Committee has been successful in reducing the number of resolutions by clustering some of them. I believe the other Committees too have had varying degrees of success with clustering.

As for the meetings of the plenary, to date 29 resolutions have been adopted, of which 6 came from the Fifth Committee.

I now turn to documentation, which has been one of the primary problems. I understand from the Secretariat that the delay in documentation is attributable in the main to late submissions by those responsible for the reports. The late submission of human rights reports from Geneva caused cancellations of meetings and in some cases jeopardized negotiations on draft proposals for Committee consideration and the timely conclusion of work. Some of these reports were too long, with those responsible failing to submit an executive summary.

Given the financial cuts and their implications, the capacity for the documentation services to perform tasks at extremely short notice has been further circumscribed.

While all reports must be of acceptable length, delegations and the Secretariat must work together to address this perennial problem once and for all.

Deadlines for submission of documentation should be tightened and enforced more rigorously.

As for the plenary meetings, let me first share with you some statistical information. The number of items or sub-items or parts/aspects of items allocated to the plenary was 75. The number of those whose consideration has been concluded is 30; the number of those whose consideration has not been concluded is 17; the number of those scheduled but not yet considered is 6; the number of those not yet considered and not yet scheduled is 22.

As all of you are aware, one of the key agenda items is item 16, entitled "Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations". In this connection, you are aware of my letter dated 25 November 1996, in which I alerted the Security Council that the General Assembly was scheduled to conclude by 17 December. When the President of the Security Council met me on 2 December, he acknowledged the letter and explained that the Council was fully seized of the matter. He explained that while all efforts would be made, it was likely that the Council would go beyond 17 December.

With regard to the election of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, under agenda item 17 (c), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the Executive Director is elected by the General Assembly on the nomination of the Secretary-General. As the term of office of the current Executive Director expires on 31 December 1996, I sent a letter to the Secretary-General on 25 November and asked him for his cooperation in this matter.

Another pressing matter concerns the appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences, agenda item 18 (g). The General Assembly is required to appoint seven members at this session. The terms of office of the retiring members expire on 31 December 1996. On 12 November I requested, in writing, the Chairmen of regional groups to inform me of endorsed candidates from their respective groups. As of now, the Group of Eastern European States and the Group of Western European and Other States have each endorsed one candidate to fill one vacancy from their respective groups. However, we are still missing candidates for five vacancies as follows: two candidates from the African States, two candidates from the Asian States, and one candidate from the Latin American and Caribbean States. Once again, I appeal to the three groups concerned, in particular to their Chairmen, to assist me in this matter and to communicate to the Secretariat as soon as possible the names of endorsed candidates.

In addition to the items I have just mentioned, there are some other pending items or matters concerning the plenary meetings that are under negotiation or consultation. I urge those delegations concerned to expedite their consultations and to submit the relevant draft resolutions for action in the plenary, preferably early next week. Furthermore, it is most urgent that those draft resolutions with programme budget implications be submitted as soon as possible. I cannot help but underline that late submission of drafts will impose further strains on the documentation services.

While recognizing the sovereign rights of Member States, I also wish to appeal to delegations to exercise restraint in proposing new additional items, especially when this session is about to adjourn and many issues still require action.

My main concern at the moment is to ensure that the consideration of reports of Main Committees are not held up at plenary level because of the debate over financial resources. My specific proposal is to suggest that the Fifth Committee, after adoption of the draft resolution by the Main Committee concerned on the basis of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, will take note of the estimate of additional requirements contained in the programme budget implications, on the understanding that such additional appropriation as may be necessary will be determined in the context of a revised appropriation, taking into account all relevant information, including the performance report. On this basis the Assembly may proceed to adopt the draft resolution.

The text of the remarks I have just made is available on the Internet home page of the Mission of Malaysia, at www.undp.org/missions/malaysia.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.